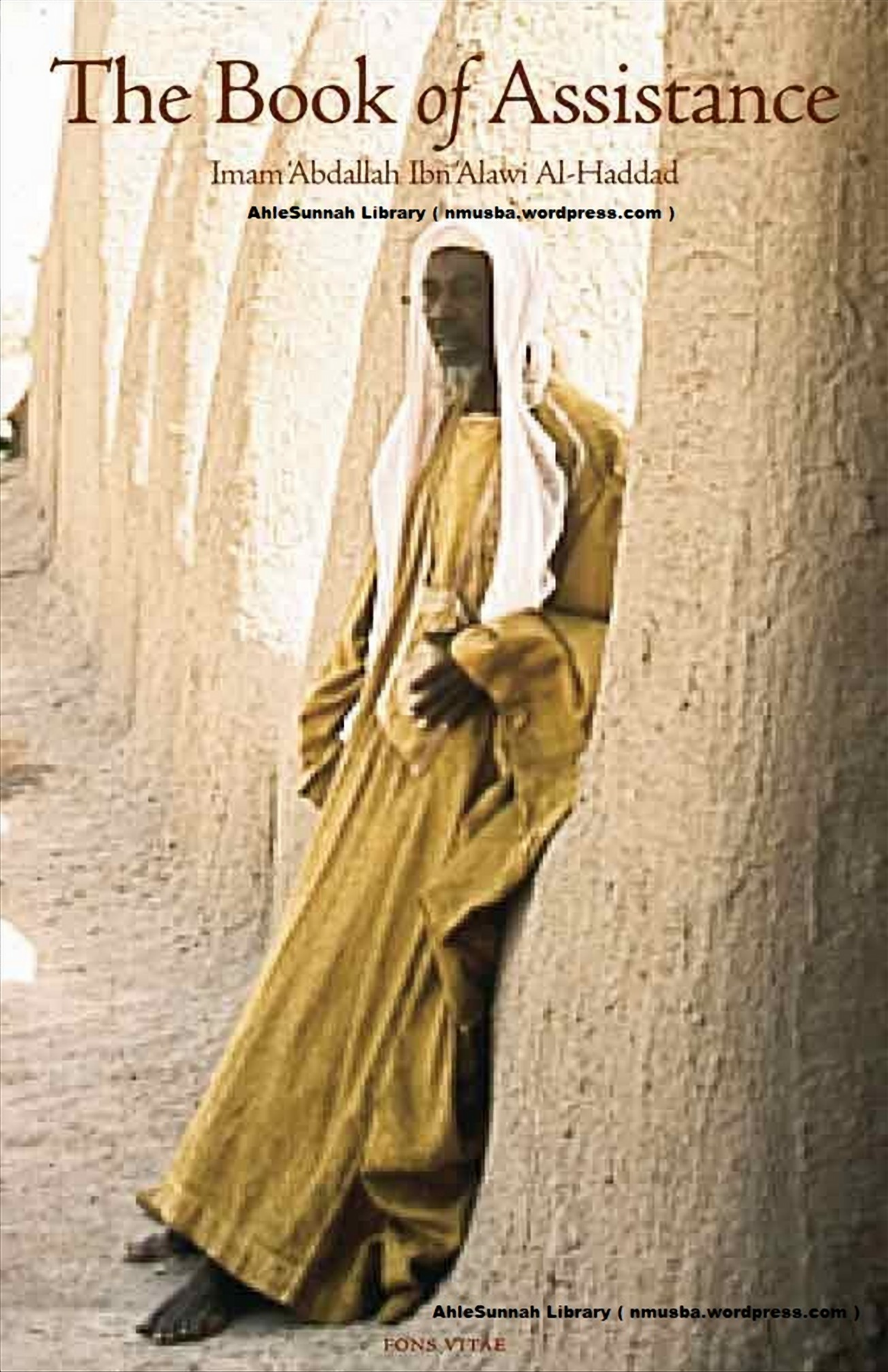


The Book *of* Assistance

Imam 'Abdallah Ibn 'Alawi Al-Haddad

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him and upon his family, prophesied that in every century God would raise up amongst his nation a man who would renew its religion. Imām ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥaddād was the renewer, or *Mujaddid*, of the twelfth Islamic century. He was renowned, and deservedly so, for the breadth of his knowledge and his manifest sanctity. The profundity of his influence on Muslims is reflected by the fact that his books are still in print throughout the Islamic world.

He was born in Tarīm, in the hills of Ḥaḍramaut, one of the southerly regions of the Arabian peninsula, and grew up in an environment where the accent was upon piety, frugality, erudition, and an uncompromising thirst for gnosis [*maʿrifa*]. His lineage is traced back to the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, and his family, through Imām al-Ḥusayn. His illustrious ancestors, the ʿAlawī *sādāt*, had for centuries produced generation after generation of great scholars, gnostics, and summoners to the Straight Path.

Imām al-Ḥaddād's writings, if we except a few short treatises, and his volume of poetry, are mostly concerned with establishing within his readers the firmest possible foundations for faith and certainty. He recognised the signs of his times, and of the times to come, and observed how people were drawing away from religion, exhibiting a reluctance to study and a diminishing inclination to seek spiritual growth. He therefore endeavoured to produce concise, clear, and uncontroversial texts. His concern for brevity is manifest throughout his books, many of which are abbreviated adaptations of Imām al-Ghazālī's monumental *Revival of the Religious Sciences* [*Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*]. Ghazālī had himself been the renewer of the sixth century.

Imām al-Ḥaddād died on the eve of the seventh of Dhu'l-Qa'da, 1132 AH, having spent his life bringing people to their Lord through his oral and written teaching, and his exemplary life. He was buried in a simple grave in the cemetery at Tarīm.

The present translation is one of the works which he designed as guides for Muslims who 'earnestly desire to tread the path of the Afterlife', and seriously follow the *Sunna* of the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him and his family.

In the original there are neither chapter numbers, titles, nor annotations. We have therefore numerated and titled every chapter, appended a glossary, and added a few notes where this seemed appropriate. Quotations from the Qur'ān are based on Pickthall's translation, and are followed by *sūra* and verse numbers.

Whenever difficulties arose in understanding the text, or deciding between different possible interpretations, the help of *sayyid* Aḥmad Mashhūr al-Ḥaddād was sought. Being the spiritual heir of Imām al-Ḥaddād, he is undoubtedly the best qualified person to comment on his writings. It is entirely through their *baraka* and assistance that the work was brought to completion; may God reward them on our behalf as befits the exaltation of their spiritual rank.

MOSTAFA AL-BADAWI

Al-Madina al-Munawwara,
Ramadan 1408

THE BOOK OF ASSISTANCE, SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR SUCH BELIEVERS AS DESIRE TO FOLLOW THE WAY OF THE AFTERLIFE

In the Name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate.
Lord, make it easy and give assistance, O Generous One!
Grant us truth for You are the One Who Grants, the Knowing.
Transcendent are You! We have no knowledge save that which You have taught us, You are indeed the Knowing, the Wise.[1]

ALL PRAISE BELONGS TO GOD, the One, the Unique, the Munificent, the Bestower, the Provider, the Solicitous, the Benevolent, Who did send Muḥammad, the Seal of His Prophets, with His Message to all men and jinn, and revealed to him *the Qur'ān in which is guidance for the people and clear indications for guidance and discernment,*[2] and ordained for him and his Nation that which He had enjoined upon Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus,[3] and gave precedence to his religion over all others, and made him the most honourable of all His creation in His sight, and rendered his nation the best nation brought out for mankind, which believed in God and the Last Day, enjoined good and forbade evil,[4] assisted each other in benevolence and *taqwā*, refrained from helping each other in sin and aggression,[5] established the ritual prayer, gave the *zakāt*, gave each other counsels of truth and fortitude,[6] and fought in the way of God, fearless of the criticism of those who are devious and forsaken. For only those in whom God's words of wretchedness, failure, disgrace and humiliation were fulfilled attempt to drive people away from God and denigrate those who give Him His due. And only those whom God has destined for happiness, safety, triumph and felicity give themselves totally

to counselling God's servants and inviting them to His door. These are the Prophet's heirs, the leaders of those who have *taqwā*, the best among believers in the sight of the Lord of the Worlds. They are firmly grounded in knowledge, have experienced the realities of faith, certainty and excellence, and attained, through unveiling and contemplation, to the secrets of God's *Mulk* and *Malakūt*.[7] They only attained to these merits and achieved such ranks through the excellence of their following in the footsteps of the Leader of Leaders whom God sent as a Mercy to the Worlds, who is God's slave, His Messenger, Beloved, and Intimate Friend, our lord Muḥammad, may blessings and peace be upon him and his house, and may these blessings be repeated in each instant and perpetuated for as long as God, the Sovereign, the Requiter abides.

To proceed; the poor servant, confessing his shortcomings and limitations, hoping for the pardon of his Able Lord, the *sharīf* ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād Bā-ʿAlawī al-Ḥusaynī, may God forgive him and his ancestors, says: This is a treatise which, by God's Ability and Power, is comprehensive, containing counsels which, by God's Grace and Mercy, will be beneficial. I was moved to write it by the wish to obey the command of God and that of His Prophet, and the desire for that which has been truthfully promised to those who give guiding directions, invite to goodness and spread knowledge. God the Exalted has said: *Let there be among you a community who invite to goodness, enjoin right conduct, and forbid evil; those are the successful.* [III:104] *Summon to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation.* [XXI:125] *Say: This is my way; I summon to God, clear-sightedly, I and whoever follows me.* [XII:108]

The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Let those who are present inform those who are absent; a carrier of knowledge may carry it to someone who has more knowledge than he, and many men carry knowledge who are not themselves knowledgeable.' And: 'Anyone who summons to guidance will receive the same reward as those who follow him, without this diminishing their reward in any

way; and anyone who summons to error will have sinned as much as all those who follow him without this diminishing their sins in any way.' And: 'The one who points out goodness obtains the same reward as the one who does it.' And: 'When the son of Adam dies his works come to an end except for three: a continuing charity, knowledge of which use is made, and a righteous son who prays for him.' And: 'The most generous of you after me will be a man who acquires knowledge and spreads it; he will be resurrected on the Day of Rising as a nation by himself.' And: 'All creatures pray for the one who teaches goodness, even the fish in the water.' And: 'All creatures are the children of God, and the dearest to God are those who are most beneficial to His children.' And none can be of more benefit to God's creatures than those who invite them to His door by teaching them the necessary knowledge of *Tawḥīd* [Monotheism] and obedience, remind them of His signs and graces, give them tidings of His Mercy and warnings of His wrath which strikes those who expose themselves to it, whether they be disbelievers or merely transgressors. I was prompted to obey this formidable command and was reinforced in my wish to attain to the generous promise given in the aforementioned verses and *hadīths*, as well as others which I have not mentioned, by a truthfully aspiring brother, a *sayyid* who treads the path to felicity, who asked me to write to him with a counsel to which he might firmly adhere. I have answered him through the aforementioned desire to obey His commands, win His reward, and obtain His assistance, hoping that He (Exalted is He) will attend to my needs, as His Messenger, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Whenever a man attends to the fulfilling of his brother's need, God shall attend to the fulfilling of his need; and God will assist His servant as long as the servant is assisting his brother.'

I seek God's forgiveness, and do not claim that my intention in writing this treatise is confined to these good religious purposes; how may I do so when I am aware of the hidden desires, egotistic passions, and worldly wishes that I harbour? *I do not claim innocence for myself; the ego is indeed an inciter to evil,*

save when my Lord shows mercy; my Lord is indeed Forgiving, Merciful.[8] The ego is an enemy, and an enemy should never be trusted. It is in effect the worst of enemies, as the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Your worst enemy is your ego which is between your flanks.' How inspired is the verse of the poet:

Beware of your ego, and trust not its mischief;
The ego is worse than seventy devils.

O God! I seek Your protection against my committing idolatry [*shirk*][9] knowingly, and Your forgiveness for that of which I am not aware!

I have begun each chapter in this treatise by saying: 'You must do such-and-such a thing!' this being addressed particularly to my own self, my brother who was the cause for writing the treatise, and generally to every Muslim who reads it. This expression has an effect on the heart of those it is addressed to, and I hope that, having used it, I will escape the reproaches and threats directed against those who say but do not do, and who know but do not act. For if I address myself saying: 'You must do this!' this indicates that the thing has not yet become a reality through my practicing of what I know, and that I am still at the stage of prompting myself to practice what I preach. In this manner, I will neither be deceiving the believers, nor forgetting myself, for this is how God has described those who have no understanding: *Do you exhort people to goodness and forget yourselves, and you recite the Book? Have you no understanding?* [II:44] And I will thus be saved from the threats directed at those who speak but do not act, as in the words of the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'A scholar ['*ālim*] will be ordered to the Fire; his entrails will spill out and he will drag them along as he moves round the Fire, just like a donkey turning in a mill. The people in the Fire will gather around him and say: "Why does this repudiated man make us suffer more than we do already?" And he will say: "This repudiate enjoined good but did not do

it, and forbade evil but committed it." And: 'When I was made to journey by night I passed by men whose lips were being clipped with scissors of fire. I asked: "Who are you?" and they said: "We enjoined good and did not do it, and forbade evil and committed it."'

These threats come true for those who summon to God when their real intention is to acquire the things of this world, and who exhort to good but persistently abandon it, who warn against evil but persistently commit it, who fall into ostentation and wish to make a reputation for themselves. As for those who summon others to God's door while upbraiding their own selves, forbidding them to be neglectful, and exhorting them to show zeal, it is to be hoped that they will be saved. Anyway, the one who knows and teaches [what he knows] but does not practice is in a better state, a wiser way, and has a safer outcome than the one who knows, but neither practices nor teaches.

A man of little understanding may perhaps say: 'There is already a sufficient abundance of books, there is no benefit in compiling new ones in this age.' Such a man would be correct insofar as books are indeed abundant and should be sufficient, but not in saying that no benefit is to be gained from compiling further books now. People's hearts are naturally attracted to everything new, and God gives them at each time knowledge clothed in the form best suited to the age. Books reach distant places and survive the scholar's death, who receives the merit of spreading knowledge and is accounted by God among the teachers and summoners to Him, even after he has entered his grave. As the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The one whose tongue gives life to a virtue that those who come after him practice continues to receive its reward until the Day of Rising.'

I have called the treatise *The Book of Assistance, Support, and Encouragement for such Believers as Desire to Follow the Way of the Afterlife.*

I ask God to make me and all other believers benefit from it and to render my compilation of it purely for the sake of His Noble Countenance.

It is now time to begin. Success is from God; I seek His help, depend on Him entirely, and ask Him to grant me success in being correct in my intentions and deeds. He is Guardian of this and Able; He is my sufficiency, and He is the Best of Patrons.

Chapter 1

On Certainty

You must, beloved brother, strengthen and improve your certainty. For when certainty prevails in the heart and establishes itself therein the unseen becomes as if seen and the man aided by providence says, as ʿAlī, may God ennoble his face, said: 'Were the cover to be removed, I would not increase in certainty.'

Certainty is power, firmness and stability of faith so great that it becomes as a towering mountain which no doubts can shake and no illusions rock. Rather, doubts and illusions disappear completely, and when they come from outside are neither listened to by the ear nor heeded by the heart. The Devil cannot approach the possessor of such certainty; he flees from him, fears his very shadow, and is content to keep at a safe distance. As the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Satan is afraid of the shadow of ʿUmar, and ʿUmar never takes a road but that Satan takes another.'

Certainty derives its power and excellence from many things. The first, most essential and pivotal of these is that the servant listen attentively with his heart as well as his ears to verses and *ḥadīths* relating to God, His Majesty, Perfection, Magnitude, and Grandeur, His Uniqueness in creating and deciding, ruling and compelling; likewise to the truthfulness and perfection of the Messengers, the miracles they were aided with, and the sundry chastisements which befell those who opposed them. That these are sufficient to bring about certainty is indicated by His Word (Exalted is He!): *Is it not enough*

for them that We have sent down upon you the Book which is recited to them? [XXIX:51]

The second is to learn from looking at the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and the wondrous and astounding creatures that God made them teem with. That this brings about certainty is indicated by His saying (Exalted is He!): *We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth.* [XLI:53]

The third is to behave according to what one believes, outwardly and inwardly, zealously, and to the limits of one's resources. That this brings about certainty is indicated by His saying (Exalted is He!): *Those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them to Our ways.* [XXIX:69]

Proper certainty results in, among many other things, acquiescence in God's promise, confidence in what He has guaranteed, turning to God with pure longing, abandoning all things which distract from Him, continuously returning to Him in all circumstances, and spending all one's energy in seeking His good pleasure.

In sum, certainty is the essential thing, and all other noble ranks, praiseworthy traits of character and good works are its branches and results.

Virtues and actions are strong or weak, sound or unsound, according to the strength or otherwise of certainty. Luqmān, upon whom be peace, said: 'Action is possible only in the presence of certainty; a servant acts in obedience only to the extent that he has certainty, and a man becomes neglectful in his actions only when his certainty diminishes.' This is why the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Certainty is the whole of faith.'

Believers have three degrees of certainty. The first is that of the People of the Right Hand,[10] this is firm belief but with the possibility of becoming doubtful or shaky under certain circumstances. This is called faith.

The second is that of the Ones Brought Nigh, which is the possession of the heart by faith and its establishing itself therein so firmly that its opposite becomes no longer possible

or even imaginable. In this degree the unseen becomes as the seen. This is called certainty.

The third is that of the Prophets and the True Saints [*ṣiddīqūn*][11] who are their perfect heirs. Here the unseen becomes seen, which thing is called unveiling [*kashf*] and contemplation [*mushāhada*].

There are grades within each degree: all are good, but some better than others. *That is God's grace, He bestows it upon whom He will, and God's grace is abundant.* [LVII:29]

Chapter 2

On Intention

You must, O my brother, improve the soundness and sincerity of your intentions, examine them, and reflect well before embarking on your actions. For intentions are the bases of deeds; according to them your deeds will either be good or ugly, sound or unsound. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Deeds are only according to intentions; each man has that which he intended.'

You must, therefore, utter no word, do no action, and decide no matter without the intention of drawing nearer thereby to God and seeking the reward He has assigned, through His beneficence and grace, to the intended act. And know that drawing nearer to Him can only be done through the obligatory and supererogatory devotions that He has indicated through His Messenger, may blessings and peace be upon him.

A sincere intention may change the merely licit into the devotional, for means are judged according to their ends. For example, one may eat to get the strength to perform devotions, or sleep with one's wife to obtain a son who would worship God.

It is a condition of the sincere intention that behaviour does not belie it. For instance, a man who seeks knowledge claiming that his intention is to practice and teach it will be proved insincere in his intention if, when he becomes able to, he does not do so. Or a man who pursues the world and claims that he is doing so only that he may be independent of other people and be able to give charity to the needy and help his relatives

will be proved ineffectual in his intention should he not do so when able.

Intentions do not affect sins, just as purification does not affect that which is, by its very nature, impure. A man who goes along with another who is slandering a Muslim, then pretends that he only wanted to humour him, is himself a slanderer. Anyone who refrains from the enjoining of good and the forbidding of evil and pretends that he only did so to protect himself against the culprit, is his partner in evil-doing. A malicious intention attached to a good deed spoils it and renders it malicious; likewise when one performs good deeds for the sake of wealth and prestige.

Strive, my brother, always to intend that your obedience be solely for the sake of God, and that whatever licit things you may use are only to help you to obey Him.

Know that many intentions can attach to a single act, and that each of them will attract its full reward. An example of this in devotional activities is when someone reads the Qur'ān intending to commune with God (which thing he will indeed do) but also to extract from it different kinds of knowledge, (for the Qur'ān is the very mine of knowledge), to profit those who listen or [just happen to] hear, or any other good intention. And an example in licit matters is to eat with the intention of obeying the command of your Lord in His saying (Exalted is He!): *O you who believe! Eat of the good things with which We have provided you, and give thanks to God.* [II:172] Intend by so doing to acquire strength for devotion, and to put yourself in a situation where you must thank your Lord, for He says (Transcendent is He!): *Eat of your Lord's provision and thank Him.* [XXXIV:15] You can apply these two examples in an analogous fashion to all other devotional and licit activities; and always do your best to increase your good intentions.

The word 'intention' can have one of two meanings. The first is the aim which made you decide, do, or say something. Taken in this sense the intention is usually better than the act when the act is good, and worse when the act is evil. He has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The intention of a

believer is better than his action;' notice how he specifically mentioned the believer. The second is your decision and determination to act. Taken in this sense it is not better than the act. A man, when he decides to do something, can only be in one of three situations. [I] He decides and acts. [II] He decides but fails to act while able to. The way to evaluate these two situations can be clearly found in that which Ibn 'Abbās,[12] may God be pleased with them both, has transmitted to the effect that the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, said: 'God has written good and evil deeds, then rendered them clear; anyone who intends a good deed but does not perform it, God records it as one good deed, whereas should he intend and then perform it, God records it as ten good deeds, up to seven hundred fold, and to yet more multiplications. If he intends an evil deed and does not do it, God records it as one full good deed; if he intends and then does it, God records it as one evil deed.' [III] He determines upon something which he is for the time being unable to do and says: 'Were I able, I would do [such-and-such a thing].' He receives the same as the one who acts, whether this be for or against him.

The evidence for this is the Prophet's saying, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'People are of four kinds: a man to whom God has given knowledge and wealth, and who uses his knowledge to manage his wealth; another who says: "Were God to give me just as He has given so-and-so I would act like him," – their rewards are equal. And a man to whom God has given wealth but no knowledge, who mishandles his wealth through ignorance; while another says: "Were God to give me as He has given so-and-so I would act like him" – their burdens of sin are equal.'

Chapter 3

On Vigilance

You must, O my brothers, be mindful of God in all your movements and times of stillness, at every moment, with every blink of the eye, with every thought, wish or any other state. Feel His nearness to you! Know that He looks and is Aware of you, that nothing that you conceal is hidden from Him, *nothing that weighs so much as an atom is hidden from your Lord, whether on earth or in heaven,*[13] *when you speak aloud He knows your secret [thought] and that which is even more hidden.*[14] *He is with you wherever you are,*[15] with His knowledge, awareness and power. If you are of the righteous, He will guide, assist and protect you.

Have modesty before your Lord as you should; make sure that He never sees you in a situation which He has forbidden you, and never misses you where He has commanded you to be; worship Him as if you saw Him, for even if you do not see Him, He sees you. Whenever you notice in your soul any laziness in His worship or inclination to disobedience, remind it that God hears and sees you and knows your secrets and secret conversation. If this reminding does not benefit it because of the inadequacy of its knowledge of the Majesty of God, remind it of the two noble angels who record good and evil deeds, and recite to it: *When the two receivers receive, sitting on the right and on the left; he utters no word but there is with him a watcher, ready.* [L:17, 18] If this reminding does not influence it, remind it of the proximity of death, that it is the nearest of all hidden and awaited things; frighten it of its sudden pouncing, whereby if it does come when it is in an unsatisfactory

state it will end up in endless perdition. If this threat is of no use, remind it of the immense reward which God has promised those who obey Him, and the painful torment with which He has threatened those who disobey Him. Say to it: 'O soul! After death there will be no opportunity to repent, and there will be, after this life, only the Garden or the Fire. Choose, if you will, obedience, the consequence of which is triumph, contentment, immortality in vast gardens, and looking at the Face of God, the Generous, the Beneficent; or else disobedience, the consequence of which is degradation, humiliation, mockery, deprivation, and imprisonment between layers of fire.' Endeavour to cure your soul with such reminders when it neglects obedience and inclines to rebellion, for they are useful medicines for the heart's diseases.

If you find emerging in your heart, when you call to mind the fact that God observes you, a shyness that prevents you from disobeying Him and drives you to exert yourself in obeying Him, you are in possession of something of the realities of vigilance [*murāqaba*].

Know that vigilance is one of the most noble stations, high positions, and lofty degrees. It is the station of excellence [*iḥsān*] indicated in the Prophet's saying, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Excellence is to worship God as if you saw Him, for if you do not see Him, He sees you.' Each believer has faith that nothing on earth or in heaven is concealed from God, that God is with him wherever he is, and that none of his movements or times of stillness are concealed from Him. But the important thing is that this awareness be permanent and that its results appear, the least of which is that he does nothing, when alone with God, that he would be ashamed of should a man of virtue see him. This is rare, and it eventually leads to that which is rarer still, whereby the servant is totally immersed in God, annihilated in Him and thus rendered unaware of all else, absent from creation through his contemplation of the True King, having arrived at *a secure seat in the presence of an Able Sovereign.*[16]

Chapter 4

On the Inner and Outer Self

You must, O my brother, improve your inward aspect until it becomes better than your virtuous outward appearance, for the former is where the gaze of the Real obtains, while the latter is where the envious gaze of creation is to be found. God never mentioned the inward and the outward in His Book without beginning with the inward. And the Prophet used to pray, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'O God! Make my inward better than my outward, and make my outward virtuous.'

When the inward is good the outward is also inevitably so, for the outward always follows the inward, whether for good or evil. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'In the body there lies a small piece of flesh; when it is good the rest of the body is good also, and when it is corrupt the rest of the body becomes corrupt also: it is the heart.'

Know that the one who claims to have a thriving inward but whose outward has been corrupted by his abandoning outward acts of obedience is a pretender and a liar.

The one who exerts himself in the reform of his outward aspect by caring about the way he dresses and appears, speaks, moves, sits, stands, and walks, but leaves his inward full of repellent attributes and vile traits, is one of the people of affectation and ostentation, who have turned away from the Lord.

Beware, O brother, of doing in secret that which if seen by people would make you ashamed and worried about being

censured. A gnostic once said: 'A sufi is not a sufi unless, were everything that is in him to be exposed on a plate in the marketplace, he would not be ashamed of anything that came to light.' If you cannot make your inward better than your outward, the least that you can do is to make them equal, so that you behave equally well privately and publicly in obeying God's injunctions, avoiding His prohibitions, respecting what He has made sacred, and hastening to please Him. This is the first step a servant takes on the path of special knowledge. Know this! Success is from God.

Chapter 5

On Regular Devotions

You must fill up your time with acts of worship so that no period of time elapses, whether by night or by day, without being used in some act of goodness. This is how the *baraka* within time is made manifest, the purpose of life fulfilled, and the approach to God the Exalted made constant.

You should allocate specific periods of time for your habitual activities such as eating, drinking, and working for a livelihood.

Know that no state can be sound in the presence of neglect, and no wealth useful in the presence of heedlessness.

The Proof of Islam,[17] may God spread his benefit, said: 'You should structure your time, arrange your regular devotions [*awrād*], and assign to each function a set period of time during which it is given first priority but which it does not overstep. For if you abandon yourself to neglect and purposelessness, as the cattle do, and just do anything that may occur to you at any time it happens to occur to you, most of your time will be wasted. Your time is your life, and your life is your capital; it is the basis of your transactions [with God], and the means to attain to everlasting felicity, in the proximity of God the Exalted. Each of your breaths is a priceless (because irreplaceable) jewel, and when it passes away it never returns.'

You should not occupy all your time with only one *wird*, even if it be the best, for you would then miss the *baraka* of multiplying and varying your *awrād*. Each *wird* has a particular effect on the heart, a light, a flow of assistance [*madad*], and a rank with God. Furthermore, when you move from one *wird*

to another you escape becoming bored, indolent, impatient, or weary. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh al-Shādhilī, may God have mercy on him, has said: 'Because the Real knew of the presence of boredom in you, He created a variety of acts of obedience.'

Know that *awrād* have a great effect in illuminating the heart and controlling the senses, but these only appear and become established with perseverance and repetition, and their performance at specifically allocated times.

If you are not one of those who fill all their night and daytime hours with devotional activities, then assign to yourself some *awrād* to persevere with at specific times that you make up for if missed, so that your soul becomes accustomed to keeping to them; when your soul despairs of your abandoning them altogether when you miss them, it will hasten to perform them in time. My master, shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf, may God be pleased with him, has said: 'Whoever has no *wird* is a *qird* [monkey]!' Another gnostic has said: 'The arrival of blessings depends on the *awrād*; therefore, the man who outwardly has no *wird* has no inward aspect [of any consequence].'

Be moderate and keep to the middle way in everything. Choose those acts which you are capable of persevering in. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The acts most pleasing to God are the most constant, even if few.' And: 'Choose the acts of which you are capable, for God will not grow weary before you.'

It is Satan's way to entice the seeker [*murīd*] at the beginning of his quest to be excessive in his devotional activities, the purpose being to make him retreat, either by giving up acts of goodness altogether, or performing them incorrectly, and the accursed one does not care with which of these two he afflicts a man.

Awrād usually take the form of supererogatory prayers, Qur'ān recitations, the acquisition of knowledge, invocation [*dhikr*] or reflection [*fikr*].

We shall now mention some of the proprieties with which these religious activities need to be performed.

You must have a *wird* of supererogatory prayers, in addition to the textually established ones, and should assign a definite time for it and a definite number which you can constantly sustain. Some of our virtuous predecessors, may God have mercy on them, had a *wird* of one thousand *rak'as* each day and night. Such, for instance, was 'Alī son of al-Ḥusayn, may God be pleased with them both; others had a *wird* of five hundred, three hundred, and so on.

Know that the ritual prayer has an outer form and an inner reality. You will not have established the prayer and its outward proprieties, such as correct standing, prostration, *tasbīḥ*, recitation, bowing, and so forth until you have established both its outer aspect and its reality. As for its outer aspect, this constitutes those obligatory conditions set for it by God, while its reality is that one be present with God, sincerely intend it to be purely for His sake, approach Him with complete resolution, and collect one's heart so that one's thought is restricted to the prayer and nothing else, and maintain the courtesies necessary for communing with God. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The man in prayer is communing with his Lord.' And: 'When the servant rises to his prayer God turns His Face toward him.'

You should not occupy yourself with unspecified supererogatory prayers at a time designated for a *sunna* which the Messenger of God either did or spoke about until you have completed the maximum designated number. An example of this is the *rak'as* laid down before and after the obligatory prayers. These are sufficiently well known as to need no further comment. Another example is the *witr* prayer which is a well established and certain prayer. Some scholars have been of the opinion that it is obligatory. And the Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'God is *witr* [not an even number] and He likes what is *witr*: therefore observe the *witr*.' And: '*Witr* is truth.' Its maximum is eleven *rak'as* and its appropriate minimum three. For those who have an established habit of rising for prayer during the latter part of the night it is better to perform it then. The Prophet has said, may

blessings and peace be upon him: 'Make your night prayer the *witr*.' But those who have no such habit would do better to perform it after the night [*'ishā'*] prayer. A further example is the mid-morning [*ḍuḥā*] prayer which is a very useful and blessed prayer. Its maximum is eight *rak'as*, though some have said twelve, and its minimum two. The best time for it is when the sun is high and about a quarter of the day has gone by. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, said: 'Morning comes and on each of your fingers a charity is due. Each *tasbīḥa* [glorification] is a charity, each *taḥmīda* [praise] a charity, each *tahlīla* [unification of God] a charity, each *takbīra* [magnification] a charity, and enjoining good and forbidding evil is charity. Two *rak'as* performed in the mid-morning would supply for all that.' If this sound *ḥadīth* had been the only one transmitted concerning the merit of this prayer it would have been sufficient. Yet another example is the prayer between the sunset [*maghrib*] and night [*'ishā'*] prayers. Its maximum is twenty *rak'as* and its average six. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'God erects a palace in the Garden for the one who prays twenty *rak'as* between the two night prayers.' And he has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The one who prays six *rak'as* after the sunset prayer and does not speak ill in between will have them equal the worship of twelve years.'

It is a *sunna* to give life to the period between the two night prayers with devotions. Many *ḥadīths* and other traditions have been transmitted regarding its merit. It should be enough to know that when Aḥmad ibn Abul-Ḥawārī asked his shaykh, Abū Sulaymān, may God have mercy on them, whether he should fast by day or give life to the period between the two night prayers, he advised him to do both, to which he said: 'I cannot, for if I fast I become occupied with breaking my fast at that time.' He replied: 'If you cannot do both, then leave daytime fasting and give life to the time between the night prayers.' 'Ā'isha, may God be pleased with her, has said: 'The Messenger of God, may blessings and

peace be upon him, never entered my house after the late night prayer [*'ishā'*] without praying four or six *rak'as.*' And he said, may blessings and peace be upon him, 'Four *rak'as* after the night prayer equal the same on the Night of Destiny [*laylatul-qadr*].'

Pray at night, for he has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The best prayer after the prescribed ones is the nightime prayer.' And: 'The superiority of nighttime over daytime prayers is like the superiority of concealed over public charity.' (And it has been related that concealed charity is seventy times better than public charity.) He has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Keep rising in prayer at night, for it was the way of the virtuous who came before you, it draws you nearer to your Lord, atones for your sins, forbids you from evil, and protects the body from sickness.' Know that the one who prays after the night prayer has risen at night. Some of our predecessors used to pray their *wird* early in the night; however, rising after some sleep constitutes a defeat for the devil, an opposition to the ego, and contains a wondrous secret. This is the *tahajjud* which God commanded His Messenger to do in His saying: *Perform* tahajjud *by night, as an act of supererogation for you.* [XVII:19] It has been related that God wonders at a servant who rises from his bed, from his wife's side, to pray. He takes pride in him before His angels and turns His noble Face towards him. Know that it is an ugly thing in the seeker of the hereafter not to rise in the night; how [can he not] when a seeker should always be asking for more and exposing himself to His gifts at all times. For he has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'There is in the night a time that no Muslim servant [of God] encounters and in which he asks God for some good of the world or of the hereafter but that He grants it him. This happens every night.' (Tradition related by Muslim.)

In one of God's revealed scriptures it is said: 'He has lied who claims to love Me but who when night falls sleeps [and leaves] Me. Does not every lover love to be alone with his beloved?'

Shaykh Ismā'īl ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jabartī, may God have mercy on him, has said: 'God has gathered every goodness into the night, and no sainthood was ever determined [i.e. formally granted] to a saint except by night.' My master al-'Aydarūs 'Abd Allāh ibn Abū Bakr 'Alawī has said: 'The one who wishes for the Lordly Purity should break himself in the depths of the night.' The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'God descends every night to the Terrestrial Heaven when only the last third of the night remains, and says: "Is anyone praying, that I may answer him? Is anyone seeking forgiveness, that I may forgive him? Is anyone asking, that I may give to him?" until the break of day.' Had this been the only *ḥadīth* exhorting to night vigils it would have sufficed, so how must it be when both the Book and the *sunna* are full of encouragements and exhortations to it? The gnostics have in their night vigils noble unveilings and subtle experiences which they receive in their hearts, of the felicity of nearness to God, the pleasures of intimacy with Him and of communing and conversing with Him (Exalted is He!). One of them has said: 'If the people of the Garden are in a state similar to ours, they are indeed living pleasantly!' Another has said: 'The people of the night during their nights are as the people of pleasures in their pleasures.' And another has said: 'For the last forty years nothing aggrieved me but the break of day.' This felicity occurs only after enduring the bitterness and hardships which are in vigils, as 'Utba al-Ghulām said: 'I endured the night for twenty years, then enjoyed it for twenty more.'

Should you ask: 'What should I recite during the night prayers, and how many *rak'as* should I pray?' then know that the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, had no set recitation in his *tahajjud*. It is good to recite the Qur'ān, one part after another, so that you complete it in a month, or less or more according to your energy. As for the number of *rak'as*, the maximum that has been related of the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, is thirteen; seven and nine are also reported, but the most frequent figure is eleven.

The total purport of all the relevant *ḥadiths* is that it is encouraged and recommended, when you wake up, for you to rub sleep off your face with your hands and say: 'Praised and thanked be God, Who gave us life after causing us to die, and unto Whom is the resurrection.' And recite the last verses of *sūrat Āl-ʿImrān* (The Family of ʿImrān.) Then brush your teeth with the *siwāk*, perform a full ablution [*wuḍū'*], pray two short *rakʿas*, then add to them eight long ones. You can pray them in units of two, or four, or even do the full eight with only one salutation [*salām*], for all these have been reported. If you then find that you still have energy, pray any additional prayers that you may wish, then pray three *rakʿas* as *witr*, either with one salutation or two. Recite in the first *rakʿa sūrat al-Aʿlā* (The Most High) [LXXXVII], in the second *al-Kāfirūn* (The Disbelievers) [CI], and in the third *al-Ikhlāṣ* (Sincerity) [CII], and the last two *sūras* [CIII and CIV].

Do not think that the *witr* which is eleven *rakʿas* is one thing and the *rakʿas* we have just mentioned another. Only that which we have mentioned is reported of the Messenger of God's night prayers. Know this! God is Vast and Knowing!

Chapter 6

On Reciting the Qur'ān

You must have a *wird* of recitation of the Mighty Book to be read every day. The least you should do is read one *juz'* [one thirtieth of the Qur'ān] so that you complete it once a month, and the most is to complete it every three days.

Know that great merit attaches to reciting the Qur'ān, and an influence in illuminating the heart. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The best of my nation's devotions is the recitation of the Qur'ān.' And 'Alī, may God ennoble his face, has said: 'The one who recites the Qur'ān while standing in prayer receives one hundred rewards for each letter; the one who recites it outside the prayer but in a state of ritual purity receives twenty-five rewards for each letter; and the one who recites it without ritual purity receives ten rewards for each letter.'

Beware of concentrating, while reciting, on reciting a large amount to the exclusion of reflection and correct recitation. You must reflect and comprehend while you recite; slow, melodious recitation will assist you in this. Feel in your heart the Magnitude of the Speaker (Transcendent and Exalted is He!) and that you are before Him, reciting His Book to Him, in which He addresses His commands, prohibitions, counsels and exhortations to you. When reading verses on unification and glorification be full of reverence and awe, when reading verses of promises and threats be full of hopeful expectation and apprehension, and when reading the commands and prohibitions be thankful, acknowledge your shortcomings, ask for forgiveness and determine to show ardour. Know that the

Qur'ān is the ocean wherefrom the jewels of knowledge and the treasures of understanding are extracted. Any believer who is granted the way to understand it, his Opening [*fatḥ*][18] becomes permanent, his light complete, his knowledge vast, and he never tires of reading it night and day, for he has found therein his goal and his purpose. This is the quality of the sincere seeker. Shaykh Abū Madyan, may God be pleased with him, has said: 'A seeker is not a seeker until he is able to find in the Qur'ān everything that he desires.'

Be careful to read those *sūras* and verses which are recommended in the *sunna* at particular times; for example *al-Sajda* (The Prostration) [XXXII], *al-Mulk* (The Kingdom) [LXVII], *al-Wāqiʿa* (The Event) [LVI], and the last two verses of *al-Baqara* (The Heifer) [II] every night before going to sleep. *Al-Dukhān* (Smoke) [XLIV] on Sunday and Thursday evenings, and *al-Kahf* (The Cave) [XVIII] on Thursday night and Friday. Read, if you can, the Seven Saving Ones[19] every night, for their merits are great. Also morning and evening the first few verses of *sūrat al-Ḥadīd* (Iron) [LVII], the last few verses of *sūrat al-Ḥashr* (The Mustering) [LIX], *sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* three times and the two refuge-taking *sūras* three times each; similarly, *al-Ikhlāṣ* and the last two *sūras* together with the *al-Kursī* verse (The Footstool) [II: 255], and *sūrat al-Kāfirūn* (The Disbelievers) immediately before going to sleep, making these the last thing that you utter.

And God says the truth, and He guides to the way.

Chapter 7

On Acquiring Knowledge

You should have a *wird* of reading useful knowledge, which is that which increases your knowledge of the Essence of God, His Attributes, Acts and favours, makes you aware of His commands and prohibitions, leads you to renounce the things of this world and wish only for the hereafter, and brings your faults, the defects in your acts and the plots of your enemy to your notice. This knowledge is present in the Book, the *sunna*, and the writings of the leaders [*imāms*]. It was collected by the *imām* al-Ghazālī in his highly valuable books. Those who have religious perspicacity, are well steeped in knowledge and have complete certitude have great esteem for his books. If you wish to travel the path and arrive at the levels of Realization you must make it a habit to read them. The Ghazālī books are unique among the writings of correct sufis in that they are comprehensive, explicit and greatly effective within a short time.

You must read extensively in books of *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* [Qur'ānic commentary] and those of the 'People'[20] in general, for this is where a comprehensive opening and perfect travelling are to be found, as a gnostic once said. However, you must be wary of whatever their treatises include by way of obscure matters and bare Realities. These are present in most of the writings of shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn'Arabī, and a few of the *imām* al-Ghazālī treatises such as *al-Mi'rāj (The Ascent)* and *al-Maḍnūn bihi (The Withheld)*. Shaykh Zarrūq gave in his *Ta'sīs al-Qawā'id (The Rules)* a warning about such books (read it if you wish), but did not mention the writings of

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, for he was a latecomer; however, all of his writings should, for the sake of safety, be avoided. Should it be said: 'There is no harm in reading such books, for I take that which I understand and leave alone that which I do not,' I would say: 'You speak fairly; however, what we fear for you is that that which you [think you] understand, you understand incorrectly and 'thereby diverge from the Straight Path', as has happened to some who were assiduous readers of those books, and ended up in heresy and unbelief, and talked about incarnation [*ḥulūl*] and union [*ittiḥād*].' There is neither ability nor power save by God the High, the Formidable.

Chapter 8

On Remembrance

You should have a *wird* of remembering God [*dhikr*], which you must define with either a determined time or number. Under these circumstances there is no harm in using a rosary to keep count.

Know that remembrance is, as a gnostic once said, the pillar of the Path, the key to realization, the weapon of the seekers, and the unfolding of sainthood.

God the Exalted has said: *Remember Me and I shall remember you,* [II:152] and: *Remember God while standing, sitting, and on your sides,* [IV:103] and: *O you who believe! Remember God abundantly!* [XXXIII:41]

The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'God the Exalted says: "I am as My servant thinks Me to be, and am with him when he remembers Me: when he remembers Me within himself I remember him within Myself, and when he remembers Me in a company I remember him in a better company."' And: 'God says: "I am the companion of him who remembers Me."' And: 'Shall I not inform you of the best of your actions, the purest in the sight of your Lord, and the most elevating to your degrees, which is better for you than spending gold and silver, and than meeting your enemy so that you strike at their necks and they strike at yours?' They said: 'Yes,' And he said: 'The remembrance of God.'

Remembrance has fruits and consequences which those who persevere in it with good manners and attentiveness find. The least of these is to find it so sweet and pleasurable that

every worldly pleasure that one knows becomes insignificant. The highest is to become extinct in the Remembered, to the remembrance, and to all else.

The one who sits in a secluded place, in a state of purity, facing the *Qibla*, keeping his limbs still and his head down, and then remembers God with an attentive heart and complete courtesy, will see in his heart a manifest influence of the remembrance. If he perseveres, the lights of proximity will descend upon his heart, and the secrets of the unseen will become unveiled for him.

The best remembrance is that which involves both the tongue and the heart. The remembrance of the heart is to be fully aware of the meaning of that which flows from the tongue, for example the meaning of transcendence and unification when one utters the words of glorification and unification [*tasbīḥ* and *tahlīl*].

Out of remembering and reciting aloud or silently, what is most useful for the invoker is that which is better for his heart.

Remembrance is the continual, permanent *wird*, so strive to keep your tongue moist with it in all circumstances, except at times where another *wird*, for example recitation or reflection, is due which cannot be done at the same time as *dhikr*. These and other devotions are, however, included in the more general sense of remembrance.

Do not confine yourself to only one kind of *dhikr*; you should rather have a *wird* of every variety.

Be careful to keep to the textually transmitted invocations and prayers which follow the ritual prayers, and morning and evening, before going to sleep and on waking, and at all other specified times and recurrent occasions. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, made them *sunnas* only so that his nation would find in them the means for obtaining the goodness and escaping the evil which occur at these times and occasions. The one who, having neglected them, suffers something he dislikes, and is separated from his Beloved, should blame only himself. Anyone who wishes to practice that which we have mentioned should consult the

imām al-Nawawī's book, *al-Adhkār* (*The Invocations*); may God have mercy on him and reward him well on behalf of all Muslims. The most emphasised of that which is reported as following the ritual prayers is to say after each prescribed prayer: '*Allāhumma a'innī 'alā dhikrika wa shukrika wa ḥusni 'ibādatika*!' [O God! Help me to remember You, thank You, and worship You well!] and to recite the *tasbīḥ*, *taḥmīd*, and *takbīr* thirty-three times each, and to complete the count to a hundred by saying: '*Lā ilāha illa'llāhu waḥdahu lā sharīka lahu, lahu'l-mulku wa lahu'l-ḥamdu, wa huwa 'alā kulli shay'in qadīr.*' [There is no god save God alone, He has no partners, His is sovereignty, and His is all praise, and He has power to do all things.] Repeat this sentence ten times after the dawn, afternoon and sunset prayers, before moving your legs and before talking, and add to it: '*yuḥyī wa-yumīt*,' [He gives life and He gives death] after *lahu'l-ḥamdu*. Say also morning and evening: '*Subḥān Allāhi, wa'l-ḥamdu lil'llāhi, wa-lā-ilāha il-la'llāhu, wa'l-llāhu akbar*,' [Transcendent is God, all praise belongs to God, there is no god but God, and God is Greater], one hundred times, and: '*Lā ilāha illa'llāhu waḥdahu lā sharīka lahu, lahu'l-mulku, wa lahu'l-ḥamdu, wa huwa 'alā kulli shay'in qadīr*' one hundred times each day.

Adopt a *wird* of prayers for the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, for this will be a connection between you and the Prophet, and a door through which assistance from his presence flows in abundance to you. He has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The one who prays on me once, upon him God prays ten times.' And: 'The most beloved to me and the nearest in sitting to me on the Day of Rising are those of you who pray on me the most.' God has exhorted you to do this, so obey, do it abundantly if you wish, add salutations [*salām*], and include his family. In particular, repeat it frequently on Thursday night and on Friday, for he has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Increase the number of your prayers on me in the White Night and the Bright Day.' May God bless him and his family, and grant them peace. And praise belongs to God, the Lord of the Worlds.

Chapter 9

On Reflection

You should have a *wird* of reflection in every twenty-four hours, for which you should set aside one or more hours. The best time for reflection is the one in which are the least preoccupations, worries, and most potential for the heart to be present, such as the depths of the night. Know that the state of one's religious and worldly affairs depends upon the soundness of one's reflection. Anyone who has a share of it has an abundant share of everything good. It has been said: 'An hour's reflection is better than a year's worship.' 'Alī, may God ennoble his face, has said: 'There is no worship like reflection.' And one of the gnostics; may God have mercy on them all, said: 'Reflection is the lamp of the heart; if it departs the heart will have no light.'

The ways of reflection are many. One, which is the most noble of them, is to reflect on the wonders of God's dazzling creation, the inward and outward signs of His Ability, and the signs He has scattered abroad in the Realm of the earth and the heavens. This kind of reflection increases your knowledge of the Essence, Attributes, and Names of God. He has encouraged it by saying: *Say: Look at what is in the heavens and the earth!* [X:10]

Reflect on the wondrous creatures He has made, and on yourself. He has said: *In the earth are signs for those who have certainty, and in yourselves; can you not see?* [LI:20, 21]

Know that you must reflect on the favours of God, and His bounties which He caused to reach you.

Remember the favours of God, that you may succeed. [VII:69]

Should you [attempt to] number the favours of God, you would not be able to do so. [XLV:18]

All good things that you possess are from God. [XLVI:53]

This kind of reflection results in the heart filling with the love of God, and continuously rendering thanks to Him, inwardly and outwardly, in a manner that pleases and satisfies Him.

Know that you should reflect on God's complete awareness of you, and His seeing and knowing all about you.

We have created man, and We know what his soul whispers to him; and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein. [L:16]

And He is with you wherever you are, and God sees what you do. [LVII:14]

Have you not seen that God knows what is in the heavens and the earth, and no three [persons] converse but that He is their fourth? [LVIII:7]

This kind of reflection results in your feeling ashamed before God should He see you where He has forbidden you to be, or miss you where He has commanded you to be. Know that you must reflect on your shortcomings in worshipping your Lord, and your exposing yourself to His wrath should you do what He has forbidden you.

I created jinn and men only to worship Me. [LI:56]

Do you think that We created you in vain, and that to Us you will not be returned? [XXIII:115]

O man! What is it that has deceived you concerning your Generous Lord? [LXXXIV:16]

This kind of reflection increases your fear of God, encourages you to blame and reproach yourself, to avoid remissness, and persevere in your zeal.

Know that you must reflect on this worldly life, its numerous preoccupations, hazards, and the swiftness with which it perishes, and upon the hereafter, and its felicity and permanence.

Thus does God render the signs clear to you, that you may reflect on this world and the hereafter. [II:220]

But you prefer the life of the world, when the hereafter is better and more abiding. [LXXVII:17]

The life of the world is but distraction and play; while the Last Abode is indeed the Life, if but they knew. [XXIX:64]

This kind of reflection results in losing all desire for the world, and in wishing for the hereafter.

Know that you should reflect on the imminence of death and the regret and remorse which occur when it is too late.

Say: The death that you flee will indeed meet you, and you will then be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, and He will inform you of that which you had been doing. [LXII:8]

Until, when death comes to one of them he says: 'My Lord! Send me back that I may do good in that which I have left!' No! It is but a word he says. [XXIII:99]

O you who believe! Let not your wealth or your children distract you from the remembrance of God! up to: *But God will not reprieve a soul whose time has come.* [LXIII:9, 10, 11][21]

The benefit of this kind of reflection is that hopes become short, behaviour better, and provision is gathered for the Appointed Day.

Know that you should reflect on those attributes and acts by which God has described His friends and His enemies, and on the immediate and delayed rewards which He has prepared for each group.

The righteous are in felicity, and the depraved are in hell. [LXXXII:13, 14]

Is the one who is a believer like the one who is corrupt? They are not equal. [XXXII:18]

As for the one who gave, had taqwā, *and believed in goodness, We shall ease him into ease,* [XLII:5, 6, 7] up to the end of the *sūra*.[22]

The believers are those who, when God is mentioned, their hearts tremble, up to: *they will have degrees with their Lord, and forgiveness, and generous provision.* [VIII:2, 3, 4][23]

God has promised those among you who have believed and done good works that He will make them rulers over the earth as He made those before them rulers. [XXIV:55]

Each We took for their sin; on some We sent a hurricane, some were taken by the Cry, some We caused the earth to swallow, and some We drowned. It was not for God to wrong them, but they wronged themselves. [XXXIX:40]

Hypocrite men and hypocrite women proceed one from another; they enjoin evil and forbid good, up to: *God curses them, and theirs is a lasting torment.* [IX:67, 68][24]

Believing men and believing women are helping friends to each other; they enjoin good and forbid evil, up to: *and good pleasure from God which is greater; that is the supreme gain.* [IX:71, 72][25]

Those who do not expect to meet Us, are content with the life of the world and feel secure therein, up to: *and the end of their prayer is, Praised be God, the Lord of the Worlds!* [X:7, 8, 9, 10][26]

The result of this kind of reflection is that you come to love the fortunate,[27] habituate yourself to emulating their behaviour and taking on their qualities, and detest the wretched,[28] and habituate yourself to avoiding their behaviour and traits of character.

Were we to allow ourselves to pursue the various channels of reflection we would have to forgo the brevity which we intended. That which we have mentioned should suffice the man of reason.

You should, with each kind of reflection, bring to mind those verses, *ḥadīths* and other narratives relating to it. We have given an example of this by quoting some of the verses related to each kind of reflection.

Beware of reflecting on the Essence of God and His Attributes in the wish to understand their nature and how they exist. No one ever became enamoured of this without falling into the abysses of negation [*taʿṭīl*] or the traps of anthropomorphism [*tashbīh*]. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Reflect on the signs of God, and do not reflect on His Essence, for you will never be able to give Him His due.'

The aim and spirit of *awrād* is presence with God. Aim for it; you will reach it only if you travel the road that leads to it, which is performing the external activities and striving to be present with God during them. When you persevere in this you become immersed in the lights of Proximity, and the sciences of gnosis emanate upon you, at which your heart becomes wholly intent on God and presence becomes its

nature and well-established quality. At that time you have to exert yourself to be attentive to creatures when you need to and you may not always be able to. Such a condition results in one becoming absent [from creation], engrossed [in the Creator], and extinct to anything that is not Him. It also leads to other states special to the people of God. The foundation of all this is perseverance in outward devotions and taking care to perform them well and with an effort to be attentive with God.

Beware of leaving a *wird* for fear of not being able to persevere in it; for this is foolishness. You should not do, in each period of time, whatever happens to suit your energy and free time; on the contrary, you should have a minimum that you perform, which you can add to whenever you feel energetic, but never fall below when you feel lazy.

Know that hastening to acts of goodness, being careful with acts of worship and persevering in obedience, constitute the way of the Prophets and Saints, both at the beginning and end of their affair, for they are the creatures with the most knowledge of God, and it is therefore not surprising that they are the most worshipful, obedient, and fearful of Him (Mighty and Majestic is He!) The attentiveness of a servant is equal to his love for his Lord. Love is consequent upon knowledge: in as much as God's servant grows more knowledgeable of Him, so also shall he love Him more and worship Him more abundantly. If you become too busy amassing worldly things and following passions to have *awrād* and keep to acts of worship, strive to give your Lord an hour at the end of the day when you occupy yourself with glorifying Him, asking forgiveness, and other kinds of devotions. It has been related that God the Exalted has said: 'Son of Adam! Give Me an hour at the beginning of your day and an hour at its end, and I will take charge for you, of all that is in between.' It has also been related that the record of a servant is shown to God at the end of each day, and, if at its beginning and end there is goodness, God the Exalted says to the angel: 'Erase what is in between!' This is God's graciousness to us and all people, but most people are not thankful.

Chapter 10

On Following the Book and Sunna

You must hold fast to the Book and the *sunna*. Take refuge in them, for they are the upright religion of God, and His straight path. Those who adhere to them find safety, profit, guidance and protection, while those who deviate from them go astray, grieve, lose, and are broken. Let them govern you and control what you do, and consult them in your every affair, in obedience to the counsel of God and that of His Messenger; *O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Messenger, and those in authority among you! If you have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you believe in God and the Last Day. That is better and of fairer consequence.* [IV:59]

Refer it to God and the Messenger means, 'refer it to the Book and *sunna*.' The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'I bid you take care of that with which, if you hold to it firmly, you will never err: the Book of God and my *sunna*.'

If it pleases you to be well-guided along the white road in which there is *neither crookedness nor curvature*,[29] then measure all your intentions, traits, acts, and words against the Book and *sunna*, then retain whatever conforms to them and abandon whatever does not. And always be cautious and follow the better alternative. Never innovate in religion, nor follow the ways of the non-believers, or else you will *lose both this world and the hereafter, which thing is the manifest loss*.[30] Beware of novel things and invented opinions, for he has said, may

blessings and peace be upon him: 'Every addition is an innovation, and every innovation is an error.' And: 'Anyone who adds to this affair of ours what does not belong to it is to be rejected.'

There are three kinds of innovations. The first is a 'good innovation', which is that which the well-guided leaders have opined in conformity with the Book and *sunna*, intending to choose that which is more beneficial, more useful, and finer, as for example Abū Bakr's collection of the whole Qur'ān into one volume, 'Umar's institution of military pensions and of the *Tarāwīḥ* prayers, 'Uthmān's arrangement of the Qur'ān and institution of a first call to prayer on Friday, and 'Alī's rules for fighting heretical rebels. May God bestow His good pleasure upon the four Caliphs! The second kind of innovation is one that is 'blameworthy only from the point of view of renunciation and contentment,' such as the excessive use of licit clothes, foodstuffs, and houses. The third kind is the 'absolutely blameworthy innovation', which contradicts the provisions of the Book and *sunna*, or the consensus of the nation. Innovators have fallen into this very frequently with regards the principles [*uṣūl*], but infrequently with regard to the branches [*furū'*]. The one who does not adhere exceedingly to the Book and *sunna*, and does not do his utmost to emulate the Messenger, and then pretends that he has a certain degree before God the Exalted, should not be paid attention to, nor attended, even if he be able to fly in the air and walk on water, and have distances folded up and the laws of nature broken for him. This happens frequently to demons, magicians, soothsayers, talisman makers, astrologers, and others who are similarly in error. These can only be considered charismata [*karāmāt*] and confirmation, and not enticements and delusion, when rectitude [*istiqāma*] is present in the one in whom they appear. Such deceivers can only deceive the rabble and the base people who worship God while harbouring doubts. As for those endowed with reason and intelligence, they know full well that believers differ in their nearness to God according to the differences between them in following

the Messenger, and the more complete the emulation, the more perfect the nearness to God, and the greater the gnosis of Him. Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī once went to visit a man who was said to be a saint. He sat down waiting for him in a mosque, until the man came out and spat on the wall of the mosque, at which Abū Yazīd went away without speaking to him. He said: 'How can one be entrusted with God's secrets who is not careful to maintain the courtesies of the Law?' Al-Junayd, may God have mercy on him, has said: 'All roads are blocked except to him who follows in the footsteps of the Messenger, may blessings and peace be upon him.' And Sahl ibn 'Abd-Allāh [al-Tustarī], may God have mercy on him, has said: 'There is no helper but God, no guide but the Messenger of God, no provision but *taqwā*, and no work but to have fortitude in these things.'

Know that not everyone is capable of independently evaluating all his affairs, outward and inward, against the Book and *sunna*, for only erudite scholars can do this. Should you ever find difficulty doing so, go to one of those to whom God commanded you have recourse in His saying (Exalted is He): *So ask the people of remembrance if you do not know*. [XVI: 43]

The people of remembrance are those who have knowledge of God and His religion, practice what they know for His sake, have no desire for the world, are not distracted by commerce from His remembrance,[31] summon to Him clear-sightedly,[32] and to whom His secrets are unveiled. The presence of one such on the face of the earth has become so rare that some great men have even said that they no longer exist. The truth is that they do exist, but because of the unawareness of the elite[33] and the turning away of the commonalty, God has hidden them under the cloak of His possessiveness and surrounded them with veils of obscurity. However, those who seek them with sincerity and zeal will not, by God's Will, fail to find one of them. Sincerity is a sword that is never used against anything without cutting it. The earth is never without those who uphold the matter for God. And the Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'A group in my nation will

always exist, victoriously defending the truth, unharmed by those who oppose them,[34] until the command of God arrives.' These are the stars of the earth, the carriers of the Trust, the deputies of the Chosen One, and the heirs of the Prophets; God is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. *Those are the faction of God; indeed, the faction of God are those who will succeed.* [LVIII:22]

Chapter 11

On Doctrine

You must correct and protect your beliefs and conform to the pattern of the party of salvation, who are those known from among the other Islamic factions as the 'People of the *Sunna* and *Jamā'a*'. They are those who firmly adhere to the way of the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, and of his Companions.

If you look with a sound understanding into those passages relating to the sciences of faith in the Book, the *sunna*, and the sayings of the virtuous predecessors, whether they be Companions or Followers, you will know for certain that the truth is with the party called the Ash'arī, named after shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, may God have mercy on him, who systematized the foundations of the creed of the people of the truth, and recorded its earliest version, these being the beliefs which the Companions and the best among the Followers agreed upon. These constitute the doctrine of the people of truth in every time and place, and of all the Sufis, as Abu'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, may God have mercy on him, indicated at the beginning of his *Treatise*. It is, may God be praised, our doctrine, and that of our Ḥusaynī brothers known as the family of Abū'Alawī, and of our predecessors from the time of the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, down to the present day. When the *imām*, the Emigrant to God, the ancestor of the said *sayyids*, my lord Aḥmad ibn'Īsā ibn Muḥammad ibn'Alī ibn Ja'far al-Ṣādiq,[35] may God be pleased with them all, saw how innovations had appeared, passions multiplied, and opinions diverged in Iraq,

he emigrated from it, and travelled the earth until he reached the land of Ḥaḍramaut, where he stayed until his death. And God blessed his descendants, a great many of whom became renowned for their knowledge, worship, sainthood, and gnosis. Through the *baraka* of this trustworthy *imām* who fled from sedition to protect his religion, they remained safe from the innovations and the following of misguiding passions into which certain other factions of the Prophetic House fell. May God reward him on our behalf with the best reward He has ever granted a father on behalf of his children; may He raise his degree along with his noble forefathers in the Highest Heaven [*ʿIllīyūn*] and give us to join them in goodness and safety, having neither changed our religion nor fallen into temptation. He is the Most Merciful. The Māturīdīs are the same as the Ashʿarīs in the above regard.

Each believer must protect his faith by learning the creed of one of the *imāms* who are incontestably worthy of respect, and well-grounded in knowledge. And I can see none clearer, more comprehensive and free from suspect and misleading things than that of the *imām* al-Ghazālī, may God be pleased with him. This is to be found in the first chapter of the volume on the foundations of beliefs in the *Iḥyā'*.[36] Should you wish for more then look into the *Jerusalem Epistle* (*Al-Risāla al-Qudsīya*) in the third chapter of the same book.

Do not delve too deeply into theology [*kalām*] and do not discuss it much with the aim of truly acquiring knowledge [*maʿrifa*], for it cannot be obtained through that science. If you want to acquire truly this knowledge you must travel its path, which is to adhere to *taqwā* outwardly and inwardly, meditate on verses and *ḥadīths*, reflect on the Realm of the heaven and the earth with the aim of drawing a lesson, refine the soul's attributes, reduce its densities through discipline, polish the mirror of the heart by continuous remembrance [*dhikr*] and reflection [*fikr*] and by shunning everything that might distract you from devoting yourself entirely to this affair. This is the way to attain, and if you tread it you will, by God's Will, find what you are seeking. Sufis have struggled against their souls,

disciplined them and weaned them of their habits and familiar things, because they knew that on this depends the fullness of gnosis, and on the fullness of gnosis depends the realization of the station of servitude [*'ubūdiyya*] which is the aim of the gnostics and the hope of those who realise, may God be pleased with them all.

Chapter 12

On Religious Obligations

You must observe the obligations and the prohibitions, and increase your supererogatory devotions. For if you do this purely for the sake of God you will attain to the utmost proximity to Him, the gift of love shall be bestowed upon you, and then all your movements and times of stillness will become for and by Him. This is the bestowal of sainthood or even vice-regency [*khilāfa*].[37] And this is what the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, referred to when he said: 'God the Exalted says: "My servant draws nearer to Me with nothing more pleasing to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him, and then continues to draw nearer to Me with supererogatory devotions until I love him; and when I love him I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks, so that by Me he hears, by Me he sees, by Me he strikes, and by Me he walks. Should he ask Me, I shall surely grant him his request; should he ask Me for protection I shall surely protect him. Never do I hesitate[38] in anything as I hesitate in taking the soul of my believing servant; he dislikes death, and I dislike to displease him, but it is a thing inevitable".'

See, may God have mercy on you, what this *ḥadīth Qudsī* (Holy Tradition) contains of secrets and gnoses, and ponder on the fine meanings and subtleties which it indicates. This fortunate servant only reaches that great rank, where everything he likes is liked by God, and everything he dislikes is disliked by Him by virtue of his conforming to what He has

made obligatory upon him, and his performing supererogatory devotions in abundance in his wish to draw nearer to Him. So make haste! Make haste, if you are determined to reach the degrees of perfection and wish to attain to the ranks of men.[39] The path is now clear before you, and the radiance of realization has appeared to you.

Know that God has put much good into supererogatory devotions, through His grace and mercy, for many imperfections occur in obligatory worship. However, imperfection in an obligatory act can only be redeemed by an act of supererogation of the same kind: prayer by prayer, and fasting by fasting. Obligations are the basis and acts of supererogation are dependent upon them.

The one who performs the obligations, avoids the prohibited things, and does not add anything to this is better than him who performs acts of supererogation but neglects some obligations. Beware therefore, of neglecting any obligations while occupied with acts of supererogation, for you would thereby sin, and by abandoning your obligations your acts of supererogation will become unacceptable to God. An example of this is the man who occupies himself with acquiring a kind of knowledge which is, for him, supererogatory, and neglects acquiring the kind which is, for him, obligatory, either outwardly or inwardly. Another is the man who is able to but neglects working for a livelihood and busies himself with supererogatory devotions, leaving his children to beg from others. You can use these two examples to assess by analogy other similar situations.

Know that you will never attain to the performing of obligations, the avoiding of the prohibited things, and the performance of the supererogatory acts that He has laid down for you to draw nearer to Him, save through knowledge. Seek it then! For he has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.' Knowledge makes you aware of what is a duty, what is recommended, what is forbidden, how to perform your duties and recommended acts, and how to avoid what is

prohibited. Therefore, you must have knowledge and cannot dispense with it; for on the practice of it your happiness in this world and the hereafter depends. Know that those who worship but have no knowledge end up receiving more harm from their worship than benefit. How many a worshipper has tired himself out in worshipping while persistently committing a sin which he believed to be an act of obedience or [at any rate] not a sin! The gnostic shaykh Ibn ʿArabī, in the chapter on advice in the *Futūḥāt*,[40] relates the story of a Moroccan who showed great zeal in worship, and [one day] bought a female donkey which he never [ostensibly] used for any purpose. A man questioned him about why he kept the animal and he replied: 'I keep it to protect my genitals [from adultery].' He did not know that it was prohibited to have intercourse with animals! When he was informed about this he was frightened and wept profusely.

The knowledge obligatory upon every Muslim is to know the mandatory status of those things which God has made obligatory upon him, and the forbidden status of those which God has prohibited him. As for knowing the way to perform each obligation, this becomes obligatory only at the time of wanting to perform it. The one who reaches puberty or enters Islam in the month of Muḥarram, for instance, must immediately learn the meaning of the two Affirmations, and utter them; and then learn about the duty of performing the five prayers and their necessary components and rules. He must then learn about the obligations of fasting, the *zakāt*, the pilgrimage [*ḥajj*], and so forth, and about the prohibition of adultery, wine-drinking, the wrongful appropriation of other people's wealth, and the other things forbidden by the Law. It is not necessary for him to learn precisely how to fast or perform the *Ḥajj* until Ramaḍān or *Ḥajj* time arrives, nor how to calculate the *zakāt* until he has enough money for the *zakāt* to become due and its time arrives. And God knows best.

The main duties and prohibitions are well known among Muslims; the important thing, however, is to know the various rules, which can only be acquired from a scholar who fears

God and upholds the truth. The commonalty are sometimes right and sometimes mistaken, so beware of doing what they do and leaving what they leave by emulation, for emulation can be sound only if it be of a scholar who practices that which he knows, and such people are today a rarity. Therefore, if you see a scholar these days and observe him doing or leaving something, and you do not know whether this is right or wrong, do not be content with just having seen what he does or refrains from doing; ask him about the legal reasons and the religious rules behind it.

A Muslim does not need a long time to acquire the knowledge that is obligatory for him, nor is much hardship involved. An intelligent student will find it sufficient to sit with a proficient scholar for an hour or two. A bedouin once came to the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, while he was preaching from his pulpit, and asked him to teach him some of that which God had taught him. He descended from his pulpit, taught him, then returned to it and completed his sermon.

On the whole, those who want security and gain must not initiate any act or continue in something already initiated until they know God's ruling in its regard: whether it is obligatory, recommended, just licit, or prohibited. Everything will fall into one of those four groups.[41] This must surely be a duty for every Muslim.

Believers can be divided into the commonalty and the elect. The former may fall into the neglect of duties and the committing of forbidden things; they are not keen on supererogatory devotions and they use the merely licit [category of] things to excess. The best among them are those who hasten to repent and ask for forgiveness. As for the elect, they carry out their obligations and avoid prohibitions under all circumstances; they are also careful to perform the recommended things, and confine themselves when using what is licit to that which is a means of conforming to [God's] orders and prohibitions. And God is the One Who grants success.

Chapter 13

On Cleanliness

You must take care of your outward and inward cleanliness, for the one who is completely clean becomes inwardly and in his spirit a spiritual angel, although in his body and outward form he remains a physical human being. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Religion is based on cleanliness.' And: 'God is clean and likes cleanliness.'

Inward cleanliness is achieved by purifying the soul from vile traits of character such as pride, ostentation, envy, love of the world, and other similar things, and by adorning it with noble traits of character such as humility, modesty, sincerity, generosity, and so forth. The true nature of these and the way to rid oneself of vile traits and acquire noble ones were recorded by the *imām* al-Ghazālī in the second half of the *Iḥyā'*. Know this and make use of it!

As for outward cleanliness, this depends on avoiding transgressions, and keeping to obedience. The one who adorns his outward with perseverance in good works, and his inward with taking on praiseworthy attributes, has completed his cleanliness. Otherwise, he would only have a share of it proportionate to his remoteness from reprehensible traits and acts, and nearness to good ones.

Among the divisions of outward cleanliness are those things indicated in the Law such as removing excessive [hair and nails for instance] and dirt, and purification from acts which necessitate the ritual ablution and impurities. Amongst these are the removal of pubic hair, depilation or shaving of the

armpits, clipping the moustache and the paring of the fingernails. It is recommended to start with the right index finger, carry on to the right little finger, then to the left little finger through to the left thumb and end with the right thumb. As for the feet one begins with the right little toe and ends with the left little toe, in the same order as washing the toes during the ritual ablution [*wuḍū'*]. It is reprehensible to delay all these things for more than forty days. Other such things are the removal with water of the dirt which accumulates in wrinkles, the mucus in the eyes, the dirt in the nostrils, and the use of a toothpick to remove the remains of food from between the teeth. You must clean your mouth with the *siwāk,* and it is better if this be of arak wood; it is strongly recommended before initiating any act of worship. You must also clean your clothes with water whenever they become dirty, in moderation, and without imitating those who live in luxury.

Other *sunnas* related to cleanliness are the oiling and combing of the beard, cleaning all the hair, using kohl three times in each eye (for he used kohl, may peace be upon him, in this manner every night), using perfume abundantly, for it masks unpleasant odours, whether human or other; this is firmly recommended for the Friday prayer and other gatherings of Muslims. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, liked it and used it abundantly; sometimes the shine of perfume would be seen on the parting of his hair: this he did so that people would imitate him, for his body was naturally fragrant; he was in no need of perfume, and they used to collect his perspiration to perfume themselves with. It is good for men to use perfume which has a strong scent but no colour, and for women to do the opposite.

Beware of all impure substances: if soiled by any of them which is damp wash it out as soon as possible. If you become impure [*junub*] due to sexual intercourse perform the greater ablution [*ghusl*] immediately, for the *junub* is forbidden from the Presence of God, which is why he is forbidden to stay in the mosque or recite the Qur'ān. It is given on textual authority that the angels do not enter a house where there is a *junub*

person, and when the angels go the devils come from every direction. Beware of eating or sleeping while *junub*, for you would thus expose yourself to many problems; if it is not possible for you to take an immediate *ghusl* then the least you can do is to wash your private parts and perform the *wuḍū'*.

You should renew your ritual ablution [*wuḍū'*] before each obligatory prayer and strive always to remain in a state of ritual purity. Renew your *wuḍū'* whenever you break it, for *wuḍū'* is the weapon of the believer, and when the weapon is in evidence, the enemy dares not approach.

A man once came to Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī and asked him to teach him alchemy. The Shaykh promised to teach him, but only after he had stayed with him for a year and on condition that each time he broke his *wuḍū'* he renewed it and prayed two *rak'as*. At the end of the year the man went to draw water from a well, and the bucket came up full of gold and silver; he poured it back into the well for he had no desire for them whatsoever. Then he went to the Shaykh and told him. The Shaykh replied: 'You have now become all alchemy,' and he made him a summoner to God.

Pray two *rak'as* each time you make *wuḍū'*. If you cannot remain continuously ritually pure try always to be so when sitting in the mosque, reciting the Qur'ān, acquiring knowledge, and sitting for *dhikr*, as well as during all other devotions.

When you make *wuḍū'* or *ghusl* beware of confining yourself to what is obligatory. You should take care to perform all the relevant *sunnas* and proprieties, in the manner that has been handed down to you regarding his *ghusl* and *wuḍū'*, may peace be upon him.

You should perform *ghusl* every now and then with the intention of maintaining cleanliness, even if you are not *junub*. A *ghusl* on Friday is recommended in the *sunna* for those who attend the Friday prayer, and you should perform this, which should suffice for cleanliness, but under some circumstances and for some people.

When you finish your *wuḍū'* or *ghusl* say; '*Ash-hadu an lā*

ilāha illa'llāhu waḥdahu lā sharīka lahu wa ash-hadu anna Muḥammadan 'abduhu wa rasūluh.' [I testify that there is no divinity but God alone, He has no partners, and I testify that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger.]

Chapter 14

On Following the Sunna

Adhere to the good manners of the *sunna* outwardly and inwardly; make them habitual to you and you will have perfected your following and emulation of the Messenger of Mercy, the Prophet of Guidance.

If it would be pleasing to you to become one of the True Saints [*ṣiddīqūn*], then do not habituate yourself to any kind of behaviour until you study it and ascertain whether the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, any of his Companions, or any of the leaders thus behaved. If you find that they did not, while able to, then refrain, even if it be something licit, for they refrained from it only because of their knowledge that to do so was better. If you find that they did it, find out how they did it, and then follow suit. A certain scholar who refrained from eating watermelons explained his behaviour by saying that he had been informed that the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, had eaten them, but not how he had done so, and this was why he abstained from them.

We have mentioned previously to this chapter, and will again mention later on, God willing, some of the good manners to be observed during devotional activities. In this chapter we will mention some of the good manners to be observed during everyday activities. Know that the one who observes the Prophetic good manners in his everyday activities is preserved by God from trespassing into the base attributes and behaviour that are outside them, and obtains the religious and worldly benefits that God has set, through His wisdom, within them.

Anyone who would be pleased to become completely free and clean of impurities and human passions should make all his outward and inward motions and times of stillness conform to the Law, and follow the dictates of both Law and reason. When the Sufis deprecate certain everyday activities their purpose is the manner in which these are done under the influence of cravings and passions, to excess, and with neglect of the good manners established by the Law. The Proof of Islam said in *Al-Arba'īn Al-Aṣl* [*The Forty Foundations*], after providing an encouragement to follow the Prophet, and pointing out certain of the secrets of this: 'All this applies to everyday activities. As for acts of worship, I know of no cause for leaving the *sunna* that is not begotten of concealed disbelief or manifest foolishness.' Know this!

Know that you should begin everything you do with the Name of God; if you forget the Name at the beginning, say when you remember: 'In the Name of God at its beginning and its end.'

Try never to do anything habitual without first forming a good intention. When you put on your clothes intend to cover the parts that God has ordered you to cover. Put on the right sleeve of shirts and similar garments first, and take it off last. Do not allow the cloth you wrap around the lower half of your body or your shirt to go further down than the middle of your shin; if you will not do this then no lower than the ankle. Women are allowed to let their dresses down to the ground on all sides but not to let them trail more than two-thirds of a forearm's length.

Shorten the sleeves of your shirt to the wrist or the fingertips, and if you make it go beyond then do not be excessive.[42] The sleeve of the Messenger of God's shirt, may blessings and peace be upon him, was down to his wrist, and 'Alī shortened the sleeve of one of his shirts so that it did not go beyond his fingertips. Acquire only such clothes as you need to wear; do not seek to acquire the most luxurious or the coarsest of clothes, but adhere to moderation. Do not expose the areas that must be kept covered or any part of them except

when necessary. When it becomes necessary to do so say before proceeding: '*Bismillāhi'lladhī lā ilāha illā huwa*' [In the Name of God, Who is the only deity]. When you put on your clothes say: '*Alḥamdu li'llāhi'lladhī kasānī hādhā ath-thawba warazaqanīhi min ghayri ḥawlin minnī wa-lā quwwa*' [Praised and thanked be God, Who clothed me in this garment and granted it me without any ability or power on my part]. It is *sunna* to wear a turban and not to make one's sleeves too wide or the turban too large. You must utter only words of goodness. Everything that it is forbidden to say is forbidden to listen to. When you speak do so clearly and methodically, listen to what is being said to you, and interrupt no-one except when what is being said is abhorrent to God: backbiting for instance. Beware of speaking in a disorganized manner. If someone says something to you that you already know do not make him aware that you know it, for this results in your companion feeling estranged. If someone relates a story or anything else to you inaccurately do not say to him: 'It is not as you say, it is like this and this.' If it is concerned with religion make him aware of the correct version, but gently. Beware of delving into that which does not concern you or of swearing by God too frequently. Do not swear by Him, Transcendent and Exalted is He, except truthfully and when necessary. Beware of all kinds of lying, for this is incompatible with faith. Beware of backbiting and slander, and of excessive levity. Avoid all other kinds of ugly talk, refrain from poor just as you refrain from blameworthy speech. Think about what you say before you say it; if it be good [go ahead], if not keep silent. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Everything that the son of Adam says is against him, not for him, except if it be remembrance of God, enjoining good, or forbidding evil.' And: 'God have mercy on a man who said words of goodness and thus gained, or refrained from saying evil and thus was safe.' And: 'A man may utter a word thinking it insignificant, and it leads him to plummet farther than the Pleiades.'

Walk only to something good or necessary, and when you

do, do not be in too much haste. Do not walk with conceit or vanity, whereby you would drop in God's estimation. Do not get annoyed if someone walks before you and do not enjoy it when people are on your heels and walk behind you, for such are the attributes of the arrogant. Do not turn around excessively as you walk and do not turn around just out of curiosity. The Prophet used to walk powerfully, may blessings and peace be upon him, as if going downhill, and when called, used just to stop but not turn around.

When you sit, take care to keep your private parts covered, face the *Qibla*, have reverence and gravity, and refrain from fidgeting, restlessness, and repeatedly getting up. Beware of excessively scratching, stretching yourself, belching, and yawning in people's faces. If yawning overpowers you put your left hand before your mouth. Beware of laughing too often, which kills the heart, and if you can convert your laughter into a smile, then do so. Do not rise from your seat before saying: '*Subḥānaka' llāhumma wa-biḥamdika, ash-hadu an lā ilāha illā anta, astaghfiruka wa-atūbu ilayk.*' [Transcendent are You, O God, and praised by Your praises, I bear witness that there is no god but You, I seek Your forgiveness and repent unto You.] For it has been given on textual authority that whoever says so is forgiven anything he may have done while sitting.

When you want to sleep lie down on your right side, facing the *Qibla*, repent of all your sins and intend to rise at night for worship. Say: '*Bismika'llāhumma rabbī waḍa'tu janbi wa-bismika arfa'uh fa'ghfir lī dhanbī. Allāhumma qinī 'adhābak yawma tajma'u 'ibādak*'. [In Your Name, O God, My Lord, do I rest my side, and in Your Name do I raise it, so forgive me my sin. O God, protect me from Your chastisement on the day when You gather Your servants] (three times). '*Astaghfirullāh'il 'aẓīmi' lladhī lā ilāha illa huwa' l-ḥayyu'l-qayyūmu wa-atūbu ilayh*' [I seek God's forgiveness, the Mighty with Whom there is no deity; the Living, the Sustainer; and I repent unto Him] (three times). And: '*Subḥān Allāh*' (thirty three times), '*Al-ḥamdu lil'lāh*' (thirty three times), and '*Allāhu Akbar*' (thirty

four times). There are other invocations to be recited before sleep, which you should not neglect. Sleep only in a state of ritual purity, and go to sleep remembering God. Do not get used to comfortable beds, for they lead to too much sleep and neglect of night vigils; you would then feel great sorrow and regret when you see that which God has prepared for those who rise [at night]. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'People will be assembled on one plain, and a herald will call: "Where are those whose sides shunned their resting places?"[43] and a few will rise and enter the Garden without reckoning.' And: 'The mother of Solomon son of David, may peace be upon them, said: "O my son, do not sleep much at night, for the one who sleeps at night shall come as a pauper on the Day of Rising!"' The *imām* al-Ghazālī, may God's mercy be upon him, said: 'Know that a night and a day are twenty-four hours. Do not sleep more than eight, for it should suffice, were you to live sixty years, to have wasted twenty, being one third.' If under some circumstances you find yourself unable to sleep on your right side and also face the *Qibla*, then sleep on your right side and try not to set your back to the *Qibla*. If you lie down to rest but not to sleep there is no harm in lying on your left side. A midday nap helps you to rise at night, and you should therefore take one. Beware of sleeping either after the morning prayer, for this stops provision [from reaching you], or after the afternoon prayer, for this results in insanity, or yet before the night prayer, for this conduces to insomnia. If you see in a dream something that pleases you, thank God, interpret it in an appropriate and goodly way, and thus it will be fulfilled. When you see something that disturbs you, ask God for His protection from evil, spit three times to your left, turn over to your other side, and speak about it to no-one, for it will not harm you. When someone relates a dream to you do not interpret it until either he asks you to or you ask him for his permission.

When you either eat or drink always begin with *bismillāh* [in the Name of God], and conclude with *alḥamdu lil'lāh* [praised be God]. Eat and drink using your right hand. When food is

offered to you, say: '*Allāhumma bārik lanā fīmā razaqtanā wa-aṭ'imna khayran minhu,*' [O God, bless what You have given us, and give us to eat that which is yet better,] if it be milk, however, you should say: '*wa zidnā minhu*' [and give us more of it], for there is nothing better, as has been handed down. Wash your hands before and after eating, eat small morsels, chew thoroughly, and do not extend your hand to more food before you have swallowed what is already in your mouth. Eat from near the sides of the bowl and not from the middle, for the middle is where the *baraka* descends. If you drop a morsel of food, clean and then eat it, and do not leave it for the Devil. Lick your fingers and clean the bowl after you have finished. Use your index, middle finger, and thumb in eating; you can use the remaining fingers whenever you need to, for instance when eating rice. When you eat with others partake of what is immediately before you, except when eating fruit. Do not keep looking at the other people who are eating; make appropriate conversation, and do not speak with food in your mouth. If you find it necessary to spit or blow your nose, turn your head away from them or go somewhere else where you can do it. Whenever you eat at someone's house, praise them and pray for their felicity. When you have finished eating say: '*Al-ḥamdu lil'llāh, Allāhumma aṭ'amtanī ṭayyiban fasta'milnī ṣāliḥan. Al-ḥamdu lil'llāhi'lladhī aṭ'amanī hadha'l-ṭa'āma wa-razaqanīhi min ghayri ḥawlin minnī wa lā quwwa.*' [Praised be God! O God, You have fed me on goodness, therefore use me in goodness. Praised be God, Who fed me with neither ability nor power on my part.] The one who says this is forgiven his sins. Do not be obliged to use sauce with every kind of food,[44] and never criticize food however bad it is. Do not make good and pleasurable food your prime concern otherwise you will be one of those about whom the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, said: 'The worst people of my nation are those who eat luxurious food and their bodies grow on it. Their concern lies only in the different kinds of food and clothing, and they speak pretentiously.' 'Alī, may God ennoble his face, has said: 'The one whose main concern

is what enters his belly is as valuable as that which comes out of it.'

Strive to allow only licit [*ḥalāl*] food to enter your stomach, for the heart of the one who eats *ḥalāl* food for forty days becomes illuminated and the wellsprings of wisdom flow from his tongue, God honours him with renunciation of the world, his inward becomes clear, and his behaviour towards his Lord excellent. The one who eats suspect and prohibited things becomes the opposite of all this. Beware of eating excessively and frequently eating to satiety, for even if it be from *ḥalāl* foods it will still be the beginning of many evils. It results in hardening of the heart, loss of perspicacity, confused thinking, laziness in worship, and other things. The way to be moderate is to stop eating while still desiring to eat, and not to start eating until you really want food. The sign that yours is a real desire is that you desire any kind of food. When you drink water sip it, and do not pour it down. Stop to breathe three times while drinking; do not breathe into the cup, neither drink where it is cracked, nor standing up, nor from the mouth of a waterskin. If you find no container drink from your hand. After you have finished say: '*Al-ḥamdu lil'llāhi'l-ladhī ja'alahu 'adhban furātan biraḥmatihi wa-lam yaj'alhu mil-ḥan ujājan bidhunūbinā.*' [Praised be God! Who made it sweet and limpid through His mercy, and not salty and bitter through our sins.]

When you approach your wife sexually say: '*Bismillāh, Allā-humma jannibna 'l-shayṭān, wa jannib'il-shayṭāna ma razaq-tanā.*' [In the Name of God, O God, keep Satan away from us and from that [offspring] that You give us!] Keep yourself and your wife covered and behave quietly and serenely. When you feel near to your orgasm recite within yourself, without moving your tongue: '*Wa huwa'lladhī khalaqa mina'l-mā'i basharan.*' [*He it is Who created man out of water*] [XXV: 54]

Regarding whether to marry or not, the best choice for a worshipper is that which is safer from the religious point of view, better for his heart, and more conducive to collected thinking. It is extremely reprehensible for those who are not

married to think about women in a manner which increases their desire for them. Anyone thus afflicted, and unable to control it with acts of worship, must get married. If he is unable to, let him fast, for this diminishes desire.

When you go to the lavatory for either of the excretory functions, wear your sandals, put something on your head, put your left foot forward as you enter and your right foot as you exit. Say before entering: '*Bismillāh, Allāhumma innī a'ūdhu bika mina'l-khabathi wa 'l-khabā'ith.*' [In the Name of God, O God, I seek Your protection from male and female demons.][45] And as you come out: '*Ghufrānak! Al-ḥamdu lil'l-lāhi 'lladhī adh-haba 'anni 'l-adhā wa'āfānī.*' [I seek Your forgiveness! Praised be God Who removed harm from me and made me healthy.] Do not invoke God there except in your heart. Do not take in with you anything on which His Name is written, out of reverence for Him. Do not act frivolously, and speak only when necessary. Raise your clothes only to the extent of protecting them from getting soiled, keep well away from anybody's sight, and let neither your sound nor smell be noticed. Neither face the *Qibla* nor turn your back to it. This may be difficult in some buildings, when it is allowed because of the hardship [that would result]. Do not urinate in stagnant water, even if there be a large quantity of it, except when this is unavoidable, nor on solid ground, nor against the wind. This is for protection against getting soiled with urine, which leads to most of the grave's torment. So clean yourself from it thoroughly but without reaching the stage of obsessiveness. This is helped by coughing and emptying the penis by gently massaging its under surface. Clean your anal region with stones[46] then water, if only one of them is to be used then water is better. Begin with the frontal region when using water and the anal region when using stones. Say afterward: '*Allāhumma ḥaṣṣin farjī mina 'l-fawāḥish, wa ṭahhir qalbī mina l-nifāq.*' [O God! Guard my sexual organs against depravity and purify my heart from hypocrisy!]

Use your right hand in everything except in removing defilement and dirt, [always put your right foot forward

except in] entering dirty places, where you should enter with the left.

When you sneeze, lower your voice, cover your mouth, and say: '*Al-ḥamdu lil'llāhi rabbi 'l-'ālamīn!*' [Praised be God, Lord of the Worlds!] Spit only to your left or near to your left foot. Shut the waterskin's mouth, cover all vessels, and shut the house's door, especially before going to sleep or going out. Do not go to sleep until you have put out or covered all flames in the house such as lamps, and so forth. If you find a vessel uncovered in the morning or a waterskin open do not drink water from them but only use it in things for which defiled water can be used, regardless of it being clean, for its use is dangerous. Shaykh ibn 'Arabī said in the *Futūḥāt* that in every year there is an unknown night in which sicknesses descend, which find no uncovered vessel nor open waterskin but that they enter therein. This is why the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, advised people to close their waterskins and cover their vessels. If you find nothing to cover a vessel with put a twig on it and say the Name of God, and place your trust in Him, for indeed God loves those who trust Him.

Chapter 15

On Conduct in Mosques

You must stay for prolonged periods in the mosque with the intention of withdrawal [*i'tikāf*], for mosques are the houses of God and the places most beloved to Him. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The mosque is the house of all those who have *taqwā*.' And: 'When you see a man become accustomed to [stay in] the mosques, bear witness that he has faith.' God the Exalted has said: *He only shall attend God's mosques who believes in God and the Last Day.* [IX:18] And the Prophet, may peace be upon him, included among the seven whom God will shade under His Throne on the day when no shade shall exist save His, a man whose heart remained attached to the mosque from the moment he left it until his return. You must, when sitting in a mosque, have good manners and respect, and refrain from unnecessary, not to mention prohibited talk. If you feel like talking about something worldly go out of the mosque. Occupy yourself in it exclusively with worship, for it was built only for the worship of God. He has said, Exalted is He: *In houses which God has allowed to be raised, and that His Name shall be remembered therein and He be glorified morning and evening by men whom neither merchandise nor sale distract from remembering God, establishing the prayer and giving the zakāt: they fear a day when hearts and eyes shall be overturned. That God may reward them with the best of what they did and increase reward for them of His bounty: God gives freely to whom He will.* [XXIV:36, 37, 38]

When you enter the mosque do so with your right foot and say: '*Bismillāhi wa's-ṣalātu wa's-salāmu 'ala rasūl 'illāh, allā-*

humma'ghfir li dhunūbī waftaḥlī abwāba raḥmatik.' [In the Name of God, may blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of God, forgive me my sins and open for me the gates of Your mercy!] Do not sit down before you pray two *rak'as*. If for any reason you are unable to pray, say four times: '*Subḥāna Allāhi wal'-ḥamdu lil'llāhi wa-lā ilāha illa'llāhu, wa'llāhu akbar.*' When you leave do so with your left foot and say what you did when you entered, only use: '*abwāba faḍlik*' [the gates of Your favour] instead of: '*abwāba raḥmatik.*' And add: '*A'ūdhu bil'llāhi min'al-shayṭāni 'rajīmi wa junūdih.*' [I seek God's protection against Satan the repudiate and his legions.] When you hear the Call to Prayer repeat what the Muezzin says, until he says: '*Ḥayya 'ala's-ṣalāh*' [hasten to the prayer] and: *Ḥayya 'ala'l-falāḥ*' [hasten to success] when you should say: '*Lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwata illa bil' llāh*' [There is neither ability nor strength save by God]. And when he says: '*As-ṣalātu khayrun mina 'n-nawm*' [prayer is better than sleep] say: '*Ṣadaqta wa-barart.*' [You are indeed truthful and loyal.] When the Call is finished bless the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, and then say: '*Allāhumma rabba hādhihi' d-da'wati't-tāmmah, wa's-ṣalāti 'l-qā'imah, āti Muḥammadan al-wasīlata wa'l-faḍīlata wa-b'athhū maqāman maḥmūdan alladhī wa'adtah.*' [O God, Lord of this complete call, and imminent prayer, give Muḥammad the Intercession and superiority, and resurrect him to a praiseworthy rank, even as You have promised him.] Pray [*du'ā'*] as much as you can between the *adhān* and the *iqāma*, since he has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Prayers uttered between the two Calls [*adhānayn*] are never refused.' Among the prayers which have been handed down for this time is: '*Allāhumma innī as'aluka'l-'āfiyah fi'd-dunyā wa 'l-ākhirah*' [O God, I ask You for wholesomeness in this world and the hereafter!] This prayer is recommended in the *sunna* for other times as well, so use it often for it is one of the best and most comprehensive of all prayers.

Chapter 16

On the Ritual Prayer

You must pray as soon as the time for each prayer comes. You should perform your ablutions and come to the mosque by the time of the Call [*adhān*] for the obligatory prayers. When you do not, you should at least begin to get ready for the prayer immediately upon hearing the Call. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The superiority of the beginning of the time assigned to each prayer over its end is like the superiority of the hereafter over this world.' And: 'At the beginning of the period is the Good Pleasure of God, and at its end is His forgiveness.'

Take care always to perform the regular *sunnas* described in the Law, which are those before the obligatory prayer and those after. Beware of missing any of them out of complacency, and if ever you do miss any with an excuse, then perform them as soon as possible. Have reverence and an attentive heart when you pray. Perfect your standing, intone the Qur'ān and meditate on it, perfect your bowing, prostration, and all the other essential acts. Be careful also to observe those *sunnas* and good manners which are indicated in the Law, and avoid anything that may either impair the prayer or just prevent it from being perfect. If you conform to this your prayer will emerge white and glowing, and it will say: 'May God safeguard you as you have safeguarded me!' Otherwise it will come out black and dark, and will say: 'May God ruin you as you have ruined me!' The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Only that of which the believer is conscious during his prayer is credited to him.' Al-Ḥasan

al-Baṣrī, may God be pleased with him, has said: 'Every prayer in which the heart is not attentive is nearer to punishment [than it is to reward].' Satan, may God curse him, is intent on distracting the believer during his prayer, so that the moment he rises to pray he opens for him many doors into worldly affairs and reminds him of things which were not at all on his mind before. The repudiate's aim is to distract him from concentrating on God and approaching Him, for if a person misses these he will also miss God's approach to him, and may even come out of his prayer burdened [with sins]. This is why the scholars, may God have mercy on them, recommend that the one about to enter his prayer recite *Qul a'ūdhu bi-rabbi'n-nās* [*sūra* CXIV], as a protection against Satan. You must not confine yourself to the same *sūras* at the same times, except when indicated in the Law, as, for instance, *sūrat Al-Sajda* [The Prostration] and *Al-Insān* [Man][47] on Friday mornings. You must also take care not to confine yourself to short *sūras* such as *Al-Kāfirūn, Al-Ikhlāṣ, Al-Falaq* [Daybreak] and *Al-Nās* [Mankind][48]. If you lead the congregational prayer you should make it brief as is recommended in the *ḥadīth* of Mu'ādh, may God be pleased with him, who once led a prayer and prolonged it so much that a man went to the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, and complained. The Prophet said to him: 'Are you a worker of sedition, O Mu'ādh? Recite *Sabbiḥ'isma Rabbika'l-A'lā, Wa'sh-shamsi wa-ḍuḥāhā* and *Wa'l-layli idhā yaghshā*.'[49] Anyone who looks into the books of *ḥadīth* will recognize [the truth of] what we have said. It has been related that the last prayer that the Messenger of God led, may blessings and peace be upon him, was a sunset prayer in which he recited *Wa'l-mursalāti 'urfan* [LXXVII].

And God guides whom He will to a straight path.

Chapter 17

On Prayer in Congregation

When you pray behind an *imām* you must follow him properly, for 'the *imām* was appointed only so that people would be led by him.' Do not precede him in performing any of the prayer's components, nor perform them simultaneously with him; you should rather follow him step by step. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The forelock of the one who bows and rises before the *imām* is in the Devil's hand.' Try to reach the first row and compete for it without offending anyone. Beware of staying back when it is possible to advance, for he has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Some people will persist in staying back, that is, from the first row, until God will hold them back.' And: 'God and His angels bless the foremost row.' And he used to ask forgiveness for those in the first rows thrice, and for those in the second rows once only.

Assist in making the rows even and straight. If you are the *imām* then this becomes doubly incumbent upon you. This is an important thing in the Law but most people are unaware of it. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, was very concerned with this matter, and used to do it himself and say: 'You will straighten your rows or God will certainly cause disagreement to come between your hearts.' He ordered them to close the gaps by saying: 'By the One in Whose Hand is my soul, I see the Devil penetrating from gaps in the row just as a small lamb might do.' Take care to perform the five prayers with a congregation and persevere in this, for the collective prayer is twenty-seven times better than an

individual one, as is stated in a sound *ḥadīth*. Beware of missing the collective prayer for no good reason or for an unacceptable one. If, when you arrive, you find that they have already finished praying, or if you are keeping to your house in order to safeguard your religion, you must find someone to pray with so that you may obtain the reward for the collective prayer and escape the threats made in the texts against those who abandon it. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Certain people must stop neglecting the collective prayer, or else I shall burn their houses with them inside.' And: 'For the one who hears the Call, is healthy and unoccupied, and does not answer it, there is no other acceptable prayer.' And Ibn Mas'ūd, may God be pleased with him, said: 'We have seen [a time] when no-one stayed back [from the collective prayer] except hypocrites whose hypocrisy was well known.' In the days of the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, they used to bring men [who had to be] supported between two men until they were stood in the row. This is how severely those who neglect the obligatory collective prayers are regarded.

As for the Friday prayers, the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, said: 'The heart of the man who neglects three Friday prayers because he holds them in light estimation will be sealed by God.'[50] When you feel that you have an excuse not to attend the Friday or any other collective prayer, imagine that in the place where the prayer is held a man will distribute money to all those present. If you then find the energy and the desire to go, then your excuse is unsound. Feel shame before God that worldly affairs are dearer to you than what He, Exalted is He, has in store for you.

Know that an honest excuse will only prevent you from being called to account, while the reward can only be obtained by actually performing the deed. However, the reward can be accorded to some who find it totally impossible to attend, as for instance someone with continuous diarrhoea, or who is forcibly prevented from going. It can also be given to some

who, although not finding it altogether impossible to go would, by attending, cause undue hardship to another Muslim. An example of this is the one caring for a very sick person. People with such excuses, provided they feel sad and aggrieved at losing the prayer, will receive the reward. A perfect believer never abandons any act that would take him nearer to God, even though he may have a million excuses. He would only do so if he knew that not acting was more pleasing to God, and this is very rare. Thus the perfect ones among the people of God, in doing what takes them nearer to Him, endure that which firmly set mountains would be unable to carry. As for those whose faith and certainty are weak, and whose knowledge of God is inadequate, they are, when faced with having to miss an obligatory act, concerned only with avoiding reproach. *For each of them will be degrees from what they do, that He may pay them for their deeds, and they will not be wronged.* [XLVI:19]

You should charge all those for whom you are responsible, whether child, wife, or slave, with performing the obligatory prayers. When any of them refuses to do so you should admonish and put fear into him. If he rebels and persists in refusing you may reprimand and physically chastise him; if he is then not rebuked and continues to refuse then turn away and cease to have anything to do with him. For the one who abandons the prayer is a devil, remote from God's mercy, exposed to His wrath and curses, and all Muslims are prohibited from befriending him and are obliged to oppose him. This must be so, for the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The bond that is between us and them is [broken by] abandoning the prayer; thus whoever abandons it has committed idolatry.' And: 'The one who does not pray has no religion. The prayer is to religion what the head is to the body.'

Free yourself every Friday from all worldly preoccupations and devote this noble day entirely to the hereafter. Occupy yourself with pure goodness and resolute movement toward God. Watch carefully for the hour in which requests are

granted, which is a period of time in each Friday when a Muslim who asks God to grant him any kind of goodness or protect him from evil is granted it.

Be early to the Friday prayer; get there before the sun reaches its zenith, sit near the pulpit and listen carefully to the sermon; beware of distracting yourself with invocation or reflection, not to mention trivial talk or aimless thought. Feel that all the admonition and counselling that you hear is addressed to you personally. Before you move your legs [after the end of the prayer] or talk recite the *Fātiḥa, sūrat Al-Ikhlās, Qul aʿūdhu bi-rabbi'l-falaq* and *Qul aʿūdhu bi-rabbi'n-nās*, seven times each, and say when you leave the prayer, *Subḥān Allāhi wa-bi-ḥamdih* one hundred times, for there are *ḥadīths* which indicate the merit of this act.

And success is by God.

Chapter 18

On Zakāt

When you have money on which *zakāt* is payable, be aware of when it falls due, define its quantity, separate it from the rest, give it willingly, and intend it to be solely for the sake of God. If you do this it will attract *baraka*, the good things in your possession will multiply, and your wealth will become well guarded against all hazards.

You must separate *zakāt* [from your wealth] and then distribute it. Do not be like certain worldly people who do not keep it separately and who give it away piecemeal to deserving people as they come along until the amount to be spent is all paid. Do not eat of your crops, when they amount to a *niṣāb*[51] and when their quality has become apparent until you know how much of its dry weight will be due. If you want to eat from certain specific trees, then you should calculate only that which will be due from them.[52]

Know that those who devise ruses to escape giving *zakāt*, for instance by giving gifts,[53] those who knowingly give it to people who do not deserve it, and those who distribute it according to their whims, as for instance by giving it to someone whom they know will soon be useful to them, none of these men shall leave the world until God has punished them through their wealth, *and the torment of the hereafter is even greater, if they but knew.* [LXVIII:33] And if this is the state of those who do not give it strictly according to the Law, what must it be in the case of those who do not give it at all? *Those are they who purchase error at the price of guidance, so their commerce does not prosper, neither are they guided.* [II:16]

The withholder of *zakāt* is as evil as the one who leaves the ritual prayer. Abū Bakr, may God be pleased with him, fought them and called them apostates [*murtaddūn*].

You must give *zakāt al-fiṭr* [at the end of Ramaḍān] if you are required to, for yourself and on behalf of all those for whom you provide. Be liberal with charity, especially to needy relatives and people of virtue. Charity is better and brings more reward when given in this way. Give of that which you like best and which is dear to you so that you may attain to virtue. God the Exalted has said: *You will not attain to virtue until you spend of that which you love.* [III:92] Put others before yourself even in times of need and you will become one of the successful. Keep your charity secret, for secret charity extinguishes the Lord's wrath, is seventy times better than public charity, and is safe from the ostentation that ruins deeds.

Never neglect to give something away every day, even if a small amount, and do this early, for hardships do not cross [the protective barrier of] charity. Never disappoint a beggar who stands at your door; give him even as little as a date or less, for he is a gift from God to you. If you find nothing to give then send him away graciously with kind words and a promise.

When you give a needy person something, smile at him and be aware that it is you who are indebted to him, for he accepts a little from you for which you receive a reward worth more than the whole world. It has been said that a single morsel of food may bring a reward from God greater than Mount Uḥud.

Do not let the fear of poverty prevent you from giving charity, for it is the abandonment of charity which brings on poverty. Charity on the contrary attracts wealth. If the pursuer of the world gave much charity it would return to him multiplied. Know that charity has immediate and long term benefits: it immediately increases provision, lengthens life, protects from an evil death, gives bodily health, and puts *baraka* into wealth. Later on it will extinguish sins as water

extinguishes fire, shade the head of its giver on the Day of Rising, protect him from punishment, and many other things. *Only those who repent remember.* [XL:13]

Chapter 19

On Fasting

Increase your good works, especially in Ramaḍān, for the reward of a supererogatory act performed during it equals that of an obligatory act performed at any other time. Ramaḍān is also a time when good works are rendered easy and one has much more energy for them than during any other month. This is because the soul, lazy when it comes to good works, is then imprisoned by hunger and thirst, the devils who hinder it are shackled, the gates of the Fire are shut, the gates of the Garden are open, and the herald calls every night at God's command: 'O you who wish for goodness, hasten! And O you who wish for evil, halt!'

You should work only for the hereafter in this noble month, and embark on something worldly only when absolutely necessary. Arrange your life before Ramaḍān in a manner which will render you free for worship when it arrives. Be intent on devotions and approach God more surely, especially during the last ten days. If you are able not to leave the mosque, except when strictly necessary, during those last ten days then do so. Be careful to perform the *Tarāwīḥ* prayers during every Ramaḍān night. In some places it is nowadays the custom to make them so short that sometimes some of the obligatory elements of the prayer are omitted, let alone the *sunnas*. It is well known that our predecessors read the whole Qur'ān during this prayer, reciting a part each night so as to complete it on one of the last nights of the month. If you are able to follow suit then this is a great gain; if you are not, then the least that you can do is to observe the obligatory elements of the prayer and its proprieties.

Watch carefully for the Night of Destiny [*Laylat'ul-Qadr*], which is *better than a thousand months*. [XCV:11] It is the *blessed night in which all affairs are wisely decided*. [XLIV:4] The one to whom it is unveiled sees the blazing lights, the open doors of heaven, and the angels ascending and descending, and may witness the whole of creation prostrating before God, its Creator.

Most scholars are of the opinion that it is in the last ten nights of Ramaḍān, and is more likely to fall in the odd-numbered ones. A certain gnostic witnessed it on the night of the seventeenth, and this was also the opinion of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. Some scholars have said that it is the first night of Ramaḍān, and a number of great scholars have said that it is not fixed but shifts its position each Ramaḍān. They have said that the secret wisdom underlying this is that the believer should devote himself completely to God during every night of this month in the hope of coinciding with that night which has been kept obscure from him. And God knows best.

Hasten to break your fast as soon as you are certain that the sun has set. Delay *suḥūr*[54] so long as you do not fear the break of dawn. Feed those who fast at the time when they break it, even if with some dates or a draught of water, for the one who feeds another at the time of breaking the fast receives as much reward as he without this diminishing the other's reward in any way. Strive never to break your fast nor to feed anyone else at such a time except with lawful food. Do not eat much, take whatever lawful food is present, and do not prefer that which is tasty, for the purpose of fasting is to subdue one's lustful appetite, and eating a large quantity of delicious food will on the contrary arouse and strengthen it.

Fast on the days on which the Law encourages you to fast, such as the day of 'Arafāt for those who are not participating in the pilgrimage, the ninth and tenth ['Āshūrā'[55]] of Muḥarram, and the six days of Shawwāl, starting with the second day of the Feast, for this is the more effective discipline for the soul. Fast three days in each month, for these equal a perpetual fast.[56] It is better if these are the White Days,[57] for the Prophet,

may blessings and peace be upon him, never omitted to fast them whether he was at home or travelling. Fast often, especially in times of special merit such as the Inviolable Months,[58] and noble days such as Mondays and Thursdays.[59] Know that fasting is the pillar of discipline and the basis of striving. It has been said that fasting constitutes half of fortitude. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, said: 'God the Exalted has said: "All good deeds of the son of Adam are multiplied ten to seven hundredfold, except fasting, for it is Mine, and I shall reward a man for it, for he has left his appetite, his food and drink for My sake!"' 'The one who fasts has two joys, one when breaking his fast, the other when meeting his Lord.' And: 'The odour of the fasting man's mouth is more fragrant to God than that of musk.'

God says the truth and He guides to the way. [XXXIII:4]

Chapter 20

On Pilgrimage

Hasten to perform the obligations of *Ḥajj* [Pilgrimage] and *'Umra* [the Smaller Pilgrimage] as soon as you are able. Beware of postponing them while able for you may lose the ability or die while this duty is still incumbent and you will then be deemed neglectful. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The one who is not hindered by an obvious necessity, a disabling sickness, or a tyrannical ruler, and who dies without having performed the *Ḥajj*, let him die a Jew if he so chooses, or a Christian if he so chooses.'

Also, whenever able, perform supererogatory acts of *Ḥajj* and *'Umra*, just as you perform any other supererogatory devotion. It has been handed down that God the Exalted has said: 'Any servant whose body I have made healthy and whose wealth I have made abundant, and who lets five years go by without coming to Me, is an evil servant indeed.'

When you decide to go on *Ḥajj*, you must learn its necessary acts, its *sunnas*, and its invocations. You must also learn how to locate the *Qibla*, the concessions allowed during a journey and the associated proprieties, and the invocations to be said during it.

Do not intend both *Ḥajj* and commerce at the same time. You should only take such worldly goods as you intend to spend on the road. If you must [trade], then avoid anything that may distract you from the correct performance of and the due respect for the rites ordained by God.

You must visit the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, for visiting him after his death is like

visiting him during his life. He is alive in his grave as are all the other Prophets. It is churlish to go to the House of God for *Ḥajj* and then neglect to visit God's Beloved for no overwhelming reason. Know that if you had come [walking] on your head from the farthest land of Islam to visit him, may blessings and peace be upon him, you would not even have begun to render thanks for the guidance that God gave you through him.

When you wish to do something of consequence such as travelling or marrying, consult one of your brothers in whose knowledge and awareness you are confident. If the advice he gives you conforms to what you have in mind then pray two supererogatory *rak'as* with the intention of making the right choice [*Istikhāra*] and say afterwards the well-known prayer.[60] The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The one who does *istikhāra* never fails, and the one who consults [others] never regrets it.'

If you ever make a vow [*nadhr*] to God, whether it takes the form of prayers, charity, or anything else, hasten to fulfil it and do not get used to making frequent vows, for Satan may lure you into this to induce you to default.

If you swear to do something, and then find it better not to do it, or vice versa, then do whatever is best and expiate for your oath. Beware of swearing or testifying on the basis of conjecture, even if you are almost certain, let alone when it is illusory or dubious.

If your oath ever leads you to take another Muslim's money [wrongly], your duty is to return what you have taken and expiate for your oath. This consists in either feeding ten indigent people with a measure of food for each, or clothing them, or setting free a slave. If you can do none of these things then fast three days.

Never swear falsely, for this destroys homes and plunges the one who does it in the fire of Hell.

Beware greatly of false testimony, for it is one of the greatest sins, and the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has associated it with idolatry. If to abstain from testify-

ing [when able to] is a great sin, what then must be the case with deliberate falsification? We ask God for safety before the advent of regret.

Chapter 21

On Scrupulousness

You must scrupulously avoid prohibited and suspect things. Scrupulousness [*wara'*] is the pillar of religion and it is the pivot emphasised by the practicing scholars. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'All flesh that has grown on wrongfully acquired money, the Fire has first right to it.' And: 'The one who guards himself against suspect things has protected his religion and his honour, and the one who falls into suspect things will fall into the prohibited.'

Know that those who acquire prohibited and suspect things are seldom granted success in performing good deeds, and when they appear to be doing so, these are inevitably inwardly tarnished with hidden things which spoil them, such as self-admiration and ostentation. In any case, the works of those who subsist on illicit [resources] are rejected, for God is Good and accepts only that which is good. The explanation of this is that acts can only be performed by using the body, and the body can only move by the energy obtained from food. If that food is vile the energy it produces and the movements which result will also be vile. 'Abd-Allāh ibn 'Umar,[61] may God be pleased with them both, has said: 'If you pray until your backs become bent, and fast until you become [thin] like strings, God will only accept this if done with a safeguarding scrupulousness.' And it has been reported that the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The prayers of a man who buys a garment for ten dirhams one of which is illicit will not be accepted by God as long as he is wearing any

part of it.' If this is the situation with regard to a garment one-tenth of the price of which is illicit, what if the whole of it was so? And if this is the situation with garments worn on the outside of the body, what about nutrition which runs through the veins and joints and infiltrates the whole body?

Know that prohibited things are of two categories. [Firstly], there are those which are prohibited in themselves, as for instance carcasses, blood, and alcohol. These can never become permissible except in dire necessity when they are the only things available and one's survival depends on using them. Secondly, that which is licit in itself such as wood and clean water, but which is owned by someone else, thus remaining illicit until acquired by lawful means such as buying, or receiving as a gift or an inheritance, and so forth.

Doubtful or suspect things are of many degrees. In the case of some you may be [almost] convinced of their being prohibited but still entertain the possibility of their being licit; these things should be considered prohibited. Other things you may be convinced are licit, but a suspicion exists that they may be prohibited; these should be avoided out of scrupulousness. Other things are between these two degrees, for instance things which have an equal chance of being licit or illicit. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Leave that which is suspect in favour of that which is not.' A man's scrupulousness is measured by his abstaining from anything suspect until its status is clarified. A servant [of God] does not become a true man of *taqwā* until he abstains from things which are undoubtedly licit for fear of that which may follow and be doubtful or illicit. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'A servant does not attain the rank of *taqwā* until he abstains from that which is harmless for fear of [falling into] that which is harmful.' And the Companions, may God be pleased with them, used to say: 'We used to leave seventy licit avenues for fear of falling into the illicit.' But this is something that has long gone. Where are we now to find such scrupulousness as will keep us from suspect and illicit things? Ability and strength are only by God.

You must know everything that God has forbidden you so as to be able to avoid it, for the one who does not recognize evil falls into it.

Know that a religious man is not likely to do anything which is itself illicit such as eating forbidden animals or wrongfully appropriating other people's money by coercion, injustice, theft, or pillage, for these usually proceed from hard oppressive men and rebellious demons.[62] But religious men are prey to ambiguities because they neglect three things.

Firstly, they do not investigate thoroughly where this is appropriate. To expound this further, we would say that in your dealings with people you should see them as falling into three categories. The first comprises those whom you know to be good and virtuous: you may eat their food and deal with them without inquiring. The second is those whom you know nothing about, whether good or bad. When you wish to deal with them or accept their gifts then scrupulousness obliges you to inquire about them, but gently. Should you feel that this may hurt them then silence is better. The third comprises those whom you know to be wrongdoers: usurers, for instance, or people careless about their buying and selling and not really concerned where the money comes from. It is better not to deal with such people at all; but if you must, then investigate and inquire beforehand, for this is a part of scrupulousness, until you know that their licit possessions are free from ambiguity, and then still be careful. If any object reaches you that you know, or suspect from its appearances, to be illicit or suspect, then do not hesitate to refuse it, even if given to you by the most virtuous of men.

Secondly, they do not safeguard themselves against invalid transactions. This safeguarding is effected by avoiding all invalid and discouraged kinds of transactions, and by neither selling nor buying except by valid contract. There is, however, no harm in contractless transactions involving insignificant things.

Avoid cheating, lying, and making oaths concerning any merchandise. Do not hide a defect in your merchandise which

if seen by the buyer would prevent him from paying the same price. Beware greatly of usury, for it is one of the major sins. God the Exalted has said: O *you who believe! Fear God and renounce what remains [due to you] from usury, if you are [truly] believers. And if you do not then be warned of war [against you] from God and His Messenger.* [II: 278, 279] And the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, cursed the taker of usury, his client, clerk, and witness. The summation of [the law for] usury is that it renders illicit the trading of money for its kind, for instance silver for silver, and food for its kind, for instance wheat for wheat, except when the amounts exchanged are exactly equal. If the kinds differ, for example gold for silver, or dates for wheat, differences in value are allowed and payment should be immediate. There is no usury in trading an animal for an animal, or a garment or food for money.

Beware of *iḥtikār,* which is to buy food which is much needed, and then hoard it until the price goes up.

Thirdly, they are engrossed in the world's cravings and indulge abundantly in its pleasures. Scrupulousness under such circumstances becomes difficult and the lawful is narrowed down. Lawful things do not bear extravagance.

On the other hand, scrupulousness is rendered easy for those who want only what is necessary from the world. The Proof of Islam, may God spread his benefit, has said: 'If you are content with one rough shirt a year and two loaves of coarse grain each day, you will never be short of your lawful sufficiency, for the lawful is abundant. You are not required to investigate deep into everything, but just to be wary of that which you either know is unlawful, or suspect it to be so from any evident indications associated with the money.'

When you have suspicions, then scrupulousness obliges you to abstain even though that thing may be, to all outward appearances, lawful. For sin is that which causes inward suspicion and hesitation even should you be given a legal opinion by those entitled to give them, as the Prophet stated, may blessings and peace be upon him. But this concerns those

whose hearts are illuminated and who incline to the side of abstinence, and not that of indulgence.

Do not think that scrupulousness involves only food and clothes; rather it involves everything. However, if you are in possession of lawful and more purely lawful, or lawful and suspect things, then use the most lawful that you have in matters of food. For everything depends on food which, when licit, has a great illuminating influence on the heart and gives the body energy for worship. One of our predecessors has said: 'Eat what you will, for in the same wise your actions will be.' And Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, may God have mercy on him, has said: 'If you eat well you will no longer feel obliged to pray at night and fast by day.' Know this! God it is Who grants success.

Chapter 22

On Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil

You must enjoin good and forbid evil, for this is the pivot around which religion revolves, and is the reason why God revealed His Books and sent His Messengers. It is considered a duty by the consensus of all Muslims, and a great many passages in the Book and *sunna* enjoin it and warn about its neglect. God the Exalted has said: *Let there be from among you a nation who invite to goodness, enjoin beneficent acts, and forbid reprehensible ones. Such are they who are successful.* [III:104] In many contexts has God attributed enjoining good and forbidding evil to the believers, on some occasions [even] before attributing faith to them, and on others, before mentioning the regular performance of prayers and the giving of *zakāt*. He has said, Exalted is He: *Those of the children of Israel who disbelieved were cursed by the tongue of David, and Jesus son of Mary, because they rebelled and used to transgress. They restrained not one another from the wickedness they did. Indeed evil was what they used to do.* [V: 78, 79] And: *And guard yourselves against a chastisement which cannot fall exclusively on those of you who do wrong.* [VIII:25] The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Anyone of you who sees a reprehensible thing should change it with his hand; if he is unable to then with his tongue, if he is unable to then with his heart, which thing is the weakest degree of faith.' And: 'By the One in Whose Hand lies my soul, you will enjoin good and forbid evil, or God will soon send His punishment upon you;

whereupon you will pray and not be answered.' And: 'The one who is not compassionate to our young and respectful to our elders, and who does not enjoin good and forbid evil, is not one of us.'

Know that enjoining good and forbidding evil is a collective obligation [*farḍ kifāya*], which if discharged by some is not incumbent upon the rest, and the reward being proper to those who discharged it. If no one does it, everyone who is aware of it and able to act is held responsible. Your duty, when you see someone neglecting an act of goodness or committing an act of evil is to make him aware of the good or evil nature of the act, as the case may be. If he does not respond you must counsel and put fear into him; if he is still not rebuked then you must coerce him and [even] beat and compel him [to stop the evil he is engaged in], and break the forbidden instruments of distraction, pour away the wine, and restore illicit money to its rightful owners. This last degree is only for those who have either dedicated themselves wholly to God or are authorised delegates of the ruler. The first two degrees, which are the appraisal [of things as good or evil] and counselling, are only neglected by confused ignorant people or scholars who are inadequate.

Know that enjoining obligatory and forbidding prohibited things is itself an obligation. Enjoining recommended and forbidding disliked things is itself recommended.

Whenever you enjoin good or forbid evil and are not listened to you must leave the place where evil is being committed and those who commit it until they return to God's ordinance. Likewise you must detest sins and those who persist in committing them, and abhor them for the sake of God; this being a duty for all Muslims.

When you become angry because you were wronged or insulted, and this shows on your face and you find that your loathing of that deed and the person who did it are more than your loathing of any evil that you see or hear about, then know for certain that your faith is weak, and your honour and wealth are dearer to you than your religion.

You are permitted to remain silent if you know with certainty that if you enjoin good or forbid evil your words will neither be listened to nor accepted, or there will ensue obvious harm either to yourself or your property. This is when enjoining and forbidding change from being an obligation into being a tremendous virtue which indicates that the one who does them loves God and prefers Him to all else. And if you come to know that an evil will increase if forbidden, or that the harm will involve other Muslims in addition to yourself, then silence is better and, in some cases, obligatory.

Beware of dissimulation, for it is a crime. This is to remain silent for fear of losing a position, money, or any other benefit the source of which is the person committing the reprehensible act or any other depraved person.

Know that when you enjoin or forbid something that this should be done sincerely for God, gently, wisely, and with compassion, for these attributes do not combine in one person who acts and refrains in accordance with his injunctions but that his words become effective and evoke reverence, a powerful response from the heart, and a sweetness in the ears; seldom shall his words be rejected.

Anyone who has true vigilance for God, reliance upon Him, and has acquired the attribute of mercy towards His servants, cannot prevent himself from removing every evil that he sees except when prevented from doing so by means which he cannot overcome.

Beware of spying, which is seeking to know the private affairs of other Muslims and their hidden sins. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The one who seeks out the secrets of his brother Muslim will have God seeking out his secrets until He exposes him, even should he be in the depths of his house.'

Know that a concealed sin harms only its doer, but when it becomes public and is not stopped its harm becomes general.

When sins and reprehensible things become obscenely in evidence where you live, and you despair of truth being accepted, then isolate yourself, for in this lies safety; or emigrate

to another place, which action is better. For when chastisement falls on a place it includes both the wicked and the good; to the believer who was neglectful in supporting God's religion it is an expiation and a mercy, but for others it is a chastisement and an affliction. And God knows best.

Chapter 23

On Social Duties

Deal justly with those in your charge, whether 'public' or 'personal'. Be altogether protecting and solicitous for them, for God will call you to account in their regard, and 'every shepherd will be asked to account for his flock.'

By your 'personal charges' I mean your seven organs, which are your tongue, ears, eyes, stomach, genitals, hands and feet. These are your charges which God has given you and a trust with which He has entrusted you, which you should restrain from sin and use in His obedience. For God the Exalted created them only that by means of them you might obey Him; they are among the greatest of His favours, for which we should thank Him by using them to obey Him, and not in His disobedience. If you do not do this you will be turning God's favour into ingratitude. Had God the Exalted not made these organs to be your servants and made them to obey you by disposition, you would not have been able to use them to disobey Him at all. When you intend to use any of them sinfully it says in its own way: 'O servant of God! Fear God! Do not force me to commit that which God has forbidden me!' If you then commit a sin, it turns to God and says: 'I forbade him, O Lord, but he did not listen; I am innocent of what he did.' You will one day stand before God and these organs will testify to every good or evil in which you used them, on a *day which cannot be averted, brought on by God, you will then have neither refuge nor denial*[63] [XLII:47], *a day when wealth and children will be of no avail, and only those who come to God with a whole heart.*[64] [XXVI:89]

As for your 'public charges', these are all people entrusted by God to your custody, such as children, wife, and slave, all of whom are part of your charge. It is your duty to guide them to the performance of that which God has made obligatory and the avoidance of that which He forbade. Beware of allowing them to neglect an obligatory or commit a forbidden act; summon them to that in which their salvation and happiness in the hereafter lies. Teach them courtesy and do not plant in their hearts the love of the world and its cravings, for you would thus have done them harm. It has been said that the wife and children of a man shall clutch him before God and say: 'O Lord! This one did not teach us Your rights upon us; therefore give us retaliation from him!'

You must treat them with justice and graciousness. Justice is to give them everything that God has made rightfully theirs in the way of expenditure, clothes, and living with them charitably. One of its obligations is to take the wronged one's rights from the unjust among them. In a *ḥadīth* it is said that 'a servant may be recorded as being a tyrant when he has power over his family alone,' that is, when he treats them high-handedly.

As for graciousness, this is to treat them gently, and not to be harsh in asking them for the rights assigned to you by God, and to treat them with nobility, and to laugh with them at times without falling into sin, in a manner that removes estrangement and repugnance but maintains reverence and respect.

You should forgive the wrongdoers among them and those who offend you; absolve them inwardly, for what they may have embezzled of your wealth you will [one day] find on the side of good deeds [of the Balance]; it is not fitting that they acquire punishment because of you, while you are rewarded because of them. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, was once asked: 'How often should a slave be forgiven each day?' and replied: 'For seventy mistakes.' This forgiveness touches upon your rights over them, but never those of God.

Devote especial protection and solicitude to the women of your household. Teach them the rules pertaining to menstruation, the obligations of *ghusl*, *wuḍū'*, praying, fasting, the rights of their husbands, and other similar things.

Responsibility may be extensive and involve many people, as is the case with rulers and scholars. 'Each shepherd will be questioned about his flock.' God the Exalted has said: *God enjoins justice and goodness.* [XVI:90] And the Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'O God! Treat gently those who are given authority over any of my nation and treat them gently, and treat harshly those who treat them harshly.' And: 'No ruler dies having cheated his subjects but that God forbids the Garden to him.'

Be loyal to your parents, for this is a most certain duty. Beware of severing your ties with them, which is one of the greatest sins. God the Exalted has said: *Your Lord has decreed that you worship none other than Him and treat your parents excellently. If one or both of them attain old age with you say not "Fie!" to them, nor rebuke them, but speak gracious words to them. And out of mercy lower to them the wing of humility, and say: My Lord! Have mercy on them as they did care for me when I was little.* [XVII:23, 24] And: *Give thanks to Me and to your parents.* [XXXI:14] Notice how He associated the exhortation to treat them well with the unification of Him, and thanking them with thanking Him.

You must, therefore, seek to make them pleased with you, and obey them except in committing sinful things or omitting obligations. Prefer them to yourself and give their affairs priority over your own.

Disloyalty includes withholding from them any good that you are able to bring them, as well as frowning and chiding. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The scent of the Garden is perceived at a thousand years travelling distance, but not by one who is disloyal [to his parents], or the severer of kinship bonds, or the adulterous old man, or the one who lengthens his garments out of vanity, for pride is solely the attribute of God, the Lord of the Worlds.'

And he has said, may blessings and peace be upon him, that God the Exalted says: 'The one upon whom morning comes and he has done what pleases his parents but displeases Me, I am pleased with him; and the one upon whom morning comes and he has done what displeases his parents but pleases Me, I am displeased with him.'

Parents should help their children to be loyal to them by not insisting on every one of their rights, especially in these days when loyalty is scarce, evil rife, and parents consider that the most loyal of their children is the one who does not injure them. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'May God have mercy on a parent who helps his child to be loyal to him.'

Respect your ties of kinship and start with the closest to you; give generously of the good things you have and start with the nearest. God the Exalted has said: *Worship God, associate nothing with Him, behave with excellence toward parents, near kindred, orphans, the indigent, the neighbour who is of kin, and the neighbour who is not.* [IV:36]

God has in many contexts enjoined kind behaviour toward kin in His precious Book; and the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Charity to kin is both charity and joining [of kinship bonds].' And: 'Let him who believes in God and the Last Day honour his neighbour.' And: 'Gabriel has enjoined me so often with regard to the neighbour that I thought he would allow him to inherit.'[65]

Maintaining ties of kinship and kind behaviour towards neighbours will not be complete unless one refrains from harming them, endures the harming they do, and does good to them according to the means at one's disposal. He has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The maintainer [of kinship ties] is not him who rewards [acts of goodness]; rather is he the man who, when his kinship ties are severed, joins them again.' And: 'Habituate yourselves to kindness when people behave kindly [towards you], and do not behave badly when people behave badly [towards you].'

And success is by God.

Chapter 24

On Kindness and Charity

You must love and hate for the sake of God, for this is one of the firmest handholds of faith. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The best of deeds are love and hate for the sake of God the Exalted.' When you love the servant who is obedient to God because of his obedience, and hate the one who is disobedient to God because of his disobedience, and not for any other reason, then you are one who truly loves and hates for the sake of God. If you find in yourself no love for the people of goodness, because of their goodness, and no loathing for the people of evil, because of their evil, then know that your faith is weak.

Keep the company of the best of people and avoid that of the worst; sit with the virtuous and avoid the unjust. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'A man's religion is that of his intimate, so let each of you consider who to be intimate with.' And: 'A good companion is better than solitude, and solitude is better than an evil companion.' Know that associating with people of goodness and keeping their company implant the love of goodness in the heart and help to practice it, while associating with the people of evil and keeping their company implant the love of evil in the heart and the love of practicing it. The one who associates closely with a particular group of people, inevitably ends up loving them, whether they are good or evil, and a man is with those he loves both in this world and in the hereafter.

Be merciful to the servants of God and compassionate to His creatures, and be gentle and kind, and of engaging manners,

and easy to approach. Beware of being callous, coarse, obscene, or difficult to approach. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'God is only Merciful to those of His servants who are merciful; those who show no mercy are shown no mercy.' And: 'A believer is affable and easy to approach; there is no good in anyone who is neither affable nor easy to approach.'

Teach the ignorant, guide those who stray, remind the distracted, and beware of neglecting any of these things by saying: 'Only those who possess knowledge and do practice it can teach and remind; I am not one of them, and so am not worthy to guide [others], for such is the attribute of the great.' This is nothing but a satanic deceit, for teaching and reminding are part of practicing what one knows, and great men only became great by the grace of God and by their guiding God's servants to His path. If you are unworthy now, then the only way you can become worthy is to do good and invite people to it. Evil lies only in making claims and leading others to other than the truth.

Comfort the brokenhearted, be gentle to the weak and the needy, console the poor, be lenient with the insolvent, and lend to those who ask you. 'The reward for a loan exceeds that for charity eight times.' [*Ḥadīth.*] This is because a loan is taken only by one who is in need of it. Console those who are stricken by adversity, for the Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The one who consoles a man stricken by adversity, that is, helps him endure patiently, has a reward similar to his.'

Beware of gloating, which is to rejoice at another Muslim's misfortune, for the Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Do not show any gloating in regard to your brother, lest God release him and afflict you.'

Beware of openly reviling a Muslim for a sin he has fallen into, for the one who does so will be afflicted likewise before he dies.

Relieve those in hardship, fulfil the needs of those in need, and keep the sinner's disgrace concealed. For the Prophet, may

blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'God shall grant ease to him who eases the hardship of another, and shall conceal, in this world and the hereafter, [the sins] of him who conceals [the disgrace of] a believer; and He shall relieve from one of the hardships of the Day of Rising the one who relieves a Muslim from one of the hardships of this world; He shall fulfil the need of the man who fulfils his brother's need. He assists His servant for as long as he assists his brother.'

Remove all [that may cause] harm from the Muslims' road, for this is one of the branches of faith. It is related in Tradition that 'I saw a man travelling about in the Garden because of a branch of thorns which he had removed from the Muslims' road.'

Show compassion to the orphan and stroke his head, for the Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'When a man strokes an orphan's head, God records for each hair that his hand has touched ten good deeds.'

Try to gladden the hearts of believers in every possible way, as long as these ways are not sinful. Intercede for anyone who requests it of you with those with whom you are influential, for God will ask His servant to account for his influence just as He will ask him to account for his money. But if a servant falls liable to canonical punishment [*ḥadd*] such as that pertaining to adultery or theft, then beware of interceding on his behalf, for intercession in respect of canonical punishments is not permissible. If, following an act of intercession, you receive a gift for it you should refuse it, for it is a form of usury.

Always smile at believers, show them an engaging friendly face, speak well to them, be gentle and 'lower your wing'[66] to them. God the Exalted has said to His Prophet: *And lower your wing to the believers.* [XV: 88] And the Prophet has said, may peace be upon him: 'Do not disdain any act of goodness, even should this be meeting your brother with a friendly face.' And: 'A kind word is a charity.' It has been handed down that when two Muslims meet and shake hands a hundred mercies are divided between them, ninety-nine of which are for the friendlier of the two.

Beware of breaking off relations with a Muslim for the sake of yourself. If you need to leave him for a religious reason then do so for no more than three days, for the Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'The one who deserts his brother for more than three days will be driven by God into the Fire, unless God rescues him through His mercy.' This relates to desertion for the purpose of discipline; but if it be done because a wrong is being committed or a right neglected, then there can be no restoration until he reverts to right conduct.

Show delight and pleasure when something good befalls the Muslims, such as the arrival of rains, lowering of prices, or victory over aggressors or disbelievers. Be sad and aggrieved when hardship befalls them such as epidemics, rising prices, and seditions. Entreat God to relieve them of such trials, yet you should accept His decree and ordinance. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The one who is not interested in the affairs of the Muslims is not one of them.' And: 'The believers are, in their mutual affection and sympathy, as one body; when one of its organs falls ill the rest of the body is mutually affected with fever and sleeplessness.'

When a Muslim does you a favour you must accept it, and thank and reward him. If you cannot reward him, or you fear to offend him, then pray for him. For the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Were I to be offered [as little as] a foreleg or a trotter [as a gift] I would accept, and were I to be invited to a foreleg or a trotter I would go.' And: 'When someone does you a favour reward him; if you are unable to then pray for him until you feel that you have rewarded him.' And: 'The one who says to someone who has done him a favour: "May God reward you with goodness!" has given him an exceedingly good prayer.'

Never break a Muslim's heart by refusing what he offers you, when you know that anything that comes to you through him is in reality from God, and he is only His powerless and compelled means. 'Anyone who is given something he has

neither asked nor longed for and refuses it, has refused to take it from God.' [*Ḥadīth.*] A great disadvantage attaches to refusal, namely that the common folk are accustomed to respecting those who refuse their gifts, and it may be that some devout people are motivated in their refusal by the wish to display ascetism so that they be thought highly of, which is why a certain authority used ostensibly to accept and secretly dispose of such gifts charitably. But refusal may become either obligatory or recommended in some situations, as follows.

Something may be given you which you either know or have seen evidence that it is illicit, or a canonical charity may be given you on the assumption that you are deserving when you are not.

The giver may be unjust, and persistently so, and you fear that if you accept his favour your heart will lean toward him and away from what is right.

You may know from the man's behaviour that he means by his favours to lead you away from the way of God by means of causing you to assist him in committing an injustice or neglecting a right. Of this nature is anything taken by a judge, a governor, or any other man in authority from either one or both litigants in a case lodged before him. This is prohibited bribery.

You must therefore refuse [any gifts given] under any of the above-mentioned circumstances, of which there are others which shall be mentioned in the appropriate place.

Beware of praying against yourself, your children, or any other Muslim, even if they have wronged you. The one who prays against those who have wronged him shall have his prayer answered. 'Do not pray against yourselves, your children, or your wealth, for your prayer may coincide with one of the times in which prayers are answered.' [*Ḥadīth.*]

Beware of unjustly harming a Muslim or insulting him. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Anyone who hurts a Muslim has hurt me, and the man who hurts me has hurt God.' And: 'To insult a Muslim is immorality and to fight him is disbelief.'

Beware of cursing a Muslim, an animal, an inanimate thing, or any specific person, even if he is a disbeliever, unless you know for certain that he has died a disbeliever, as in the cases of Pharaoh and Abū Jahl, or unless you know that God's mercy will not, under any circumstance, reach him, as in the case of the devil. It has been said that the curse uttered by a person ascends toward heaven but that the gates are locked against it. It then descends to earth, the gates of which are also locked against it, so that it then goes to the one who was cursed, and either finds him vulnerable to it, or else it recoils against its utterer.

Effect reconciliation between the hearts of the believers, and cause them to love each other by bringing to light their virtues and concealing their vices. Restore good relations between them, for such a thing is more meritorious than supererogatory prayers and fasts, especially when effected between a father and his son, or a man and his relatives. God the Exalted has said: *The believers are but brothers, make peace, therefore, between your two brothers.* [XLIX:9]

Beware of sowing discord through slander, backbiting or anything else such as will result in antagonism and aversion; for this is considered an immense sin by God.

Slander is to report the words of one person to another with the intention of creating discord between them. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'A slanderer cannot enter the Garden.' And: 'The most abhorrent amongst you to God are those who damage [relationships] between brothers by slander, and create rifts between brethren.'

Backbiting is to say things about a person, in his absence, which he would have resented had he been present, with defamatory intent, whether this defamation be verbal, written, or indicated. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Every part of a Muslim is sacrosanct with regard to other Muslims: his blood, his wealth, and his honour.' And: 'Backbiting is worse then adultery.' God revealed to Moses, peace be upon him: 'The one who dies having repented of his backbiting will be the last to enter the

Garden, and the one who dies persisting in it will be the first to enter the Fire.'

Beware of injustice, for it will be darkness on the Day of Rising, especially injustice to others, which is never left alone by God. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The bankrupt in my nation is the one who comes on the Day of Rising with numerous good deeds, but who has struck someone, insulted someone else, and taken the money of still another; for they will take from his good deeds one by one until, when his good deeds are exhausted, some of their evil deeds are taken and added to his, after which he is cast into the Fire.' Therefore, if you ever wrong anyone, hasten to emerge from the situation by submitting to punishment if it is a legal offence, asking to be absolved if it is a matter of honour, and returning what you have taken if it is a financial injustice. It is related in Tradition that 'the one who has committed an injustice against his brother should ask him to absolve him of it before a day comes when there shall be neither dinar nor dirham, but only good and evil deeds.' If you find yourself altogether unable to make reparations for some of your injustices, then seek refuge in God with sincerity, urgency, and an acknowledgement of your powerlessness, that He may get your adversary to accept you; also pray in abundance and ask for forgiveness for those whom you have wronged.

Defend the lives, honour, and wealth of Muslims as you defend your own, whether they be present or not. The one who supports a Muslim will supported by God, and the one who deserts a Muslim will be deserted by Him.

Chapter 25

On Counsel

You must be of good counsel to all Muslims. The highest point of this is that you conceal nothing from them which if made known would result in good or preserve from something evil. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Religion is good counsel.' Part of this is to support a Muslim in his absence as you would in his presence, and not to give him more verbal signs of affection than you have for him in your heart. It is also part of this that when a Muslim asks you for advice, and you know that the correct course does not lie in that which he is inclined to do, you should tell him so.

The absence of good counsel is indicated by the presence of envy of the favours God has given other Muslims. The origin of such envy is that you find it intolerable that God has granted one of His servants a good thing, whether of religion or of the world. The utmost limit of envy is to wish that he be deprived of it. It has been handed down that 'envy consumes good deeds just as fire consumes dry wood.' The envious man is objecting to God's management of His Dominion, as if he were saying: 'O Lord! You have put Your favours where they do not belong.'

It is permitted to be envious without rancour, whereby when you see a favour of God bestowed on one of His servants you ask Him, Transcendent is He! to grant you its like.

When someone praises you, you must feel dislike for his praises within your heart. If he has praised you for something you truly possess say: 'Praise belongs to God Who has

revealed the good things and concealed the ugly ones.' And if he praises you for something which you do not possess, say as one of our predecessors has said: 'O God! Do not call me to account for what they say, forgive me what they do not know, and make me better than they think!'

In your case, do not praise anyone unless you know that your praises will incite him to more good works or unless he is a superior man whose superiority is not well known and you wish to make it so, this being on condition that you are safe from lying and he is safe from conceit.

When you wish to give advice to someone regarding any behaviour of his that you have come to know about, talk to him privately, be gentle, and do not say explicitly what can be conveyed implicitly. Should he ask you: 'Who reported this to you?' then do not tell him lest you stir up enmity between them. If he accepts [your advice] praise and thank God; if he does not, then blame yourself, and say: 'O evil soul! It is through you that I was defeated! Think! You may not have fulfilled the conditions and proprieties of giving advice.'

If you are given something as a trust guard it better than if it were your own. Return that which was entrusted to you and beware of betraying that trust. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'He who cannot keep a trust has no faith.' And: 'Three [things] are attached to the Throne: Benefaction, which says: 'O God! I am by You, therefore let me not be denied!', Kinship ties, which say: 'O God! I am by You, therefore let me not be severed!' and Trust, which says: 'O God! I am by You, therefore let me not be betrayed!'[67]

Speak truthfully and honour your commitments and your promises, for breaching commitments and breaking promises are signs of hypocrisy. 'The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks he lies, when he promises he breaks his promise, and when he is trusted he betrays that trust.' [*Ḥadīth.*] And in another version: 'and when he makes a commitment he breaches it, and when he quarrels he acts corruptly.'

Be wary of argumentation and wrangling, for they cast rancour into the breasts of men, alienate hearts, and lead to

enmity and hatred. If anyone argues against you and has right on his side, accept what he says, for truth must always be followed. If, on the other hand, he is wrong, then leave him, for he is ignorant, and God the Exalted has said: *And turn away from the ignorant.* [VII:199]

Renounce all joking; if very occasionally you do joke to assuage a Muslim's heart, then speak only the truth. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Neither argue with your brother nor quarrel, and do not make him a promise and then break it.'

Respect Muslims, especially people of merit such as the scholar, the righteous, the nobleman, and the one whose hair has greyed in Islam.

Never frighten or alarm a Muslim; never mock, ridicule, or despise him, for these are part of ominous and blameworthy behaviour. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'It is sufficient evil for a man that he should despise his brother Muslim.'

Be humble, for humility is the attribute of believers. Beware of pride, for God does not like the proud. Those who humble themselves are raised up by God, and those who are proud are abased by Him. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The man in whose heart is an atom's weight of pride will not enter the Garden.' And: 'Pride is to deny the truth and despise other people.' And: 'The man who looks at himself with admiration and at others with disdain is proud.' There are signs which distinguish the humble from the proud; *that God may separate the vile from the good.* [VIII:37] Signs of humility include a liking for obscurity, a dislike of fame, to accept truth whether it be from a man of high or low birth, to love the poor, associate with them and keep their company, to fulfil the rights people have upon you as completely as you can, thank those of them who fulfil their duties to you, and excuse those who are remiss. Signs of pride include a liking for sitting in the positions of most dignity when in company or in a public gathering, praising oneself, speaking in a pompous manner, openly displaying haughti-

ness and arrogance, strutting, neglecting the rights your brothers have upon you while at the same time demanding the rights you have upon them.

Chapter 26

On Salutations and a Salutory Opinion

Greet with the *salām* all Muslims, whether you know them or not. If you greet someone and he does not return your greeting do not think ill of him, but rather say to yourself: 'He may not have heard, or perhaps he answered and I did not hear.'

When you enter your house greet your family with the *salām*, and when you enter a mosque or an empty house say: '*As-salāmu 'alaynā wa-'alā 'ibādi'llāhi' ṣ-ṣāliḥīn.*' [Peace be on us and on the virtuous servants of God.]

When you meet a Muslim always try to greet him before he greets you. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, was once asked: 'When a Muslim meets a Muslim, who should give greetings first?' And he replied: 'The one most devoted to God.' And in another *ḥadīth* he said that a rider should greet a pedestrian, a man standing should greet a man seated, a younger man a man who is older, and a smaller group a larger.

When someone sneezes and then praises say to him: '*Yarḥamuka'llāh.*' [May God have mercy on you.] If he does not praise God, then remind him by saying: '*Al-ḥamdu li-Llāh*' [God be praised].

Do not enter a house other than your own without asking permission; if you ask thrice and receive no answer then ask no more [and depart].

When a Muslim calls you then answer with: '*Labbayk!*'

[At your service!] If he invites you to his table accept, unless you have a legitimate excuse. If he adjures you to do something, allow him to fulfil his oath so long as it does not involve anything sinful. Do not beseech anyone by God, but if beseeched in this way comply.

Visit the sick, attend funerals, and visit your brothers in God whenever you long to do so. Shake their hands when you meet, inquire about how they are and how those whom they love are, so that if any of them is sick you may visit him, and if any of them is working on something you may help if you can or else pray for him.

Think well of all Muslims, and beware of thinking ill of any of them. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Two traits are unsurpassed by any other good: thinking well of God, and thinking well of His servants. And two traits are unsurpassed by any other evil: thinking ill of God, and thinking ill of His servants.' To think well of Muslims is to regard nothing they do or say as evil when it can be interpreted otherwise. If you cannot find a good interpretation, in the case of sins, for example, then reproach them for committing them, and believe that their faith will eventually drive them to refrain and repent of them. Thinking ill of Muslims is to regard as evil those acts and words of theirs which are in appearance good. For example, you may see a Muslim who frequently prays, gives charity, and recites [the Qur'ān], and you think that he is only doing this so that people may see him, and that his aim is wealth and social position. This corrupt form of thinking occurs only to those who are inwardly vile, and is an attribute of the hypocrites. As God the Exalted has said in describing them: *Those who point disparagingly at such of the believers who willingly give charity,* [IX:79] that is, they accuse them of ostentation. And the Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Invoke God so abundantly that the hypocrites say that you are ostentatious!'

Make frequent supplications, and ask for forgiveness for

yourself, your parents, relatives, friends, and all other Muslims, for the prayer of a Muslim for his brother in his absence is answered. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Some prayers have no veils between them and God: the prayer of the wronged, and that of a Muslim for his brother in his absence.' And: 'When a Muslim prays for his brother in his absence the angel says: "Amen! And for you the same!"' Maymūn ibn Mihrān, may God have mercy on him, said: 'Anyone who asks forgiveness for his parents after each obligatory prayer has thanked them as he was ordered to do in His saying, Exalted is He: *Thank Me and your two parents.* [XXXI:14] It has been related that the one who asks forgiveness twenty-seven times a day for 'the believing men and women' will be among those whose prayers are answered and through whom people are given provision and rain, and these are the attributes of the saints.

Know that Muslims have many mutual obligations. If you want to fulfil these properly then behave towards Muslims, whether they be present or absent, as you would like them to behave towards you. Oppose your own soul, and accustom your heart to wish for Muslims every good that you wish for yourself, and detest for them every evil that you detest for yourself. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, said: 'None of you has believed until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself.' And: 'Muslims are to one another as one building, each part of which supports the others, and as one body, which when one of its organs suffers the rest of the body suffers with it.' And Yaḥyā ibn Mu'ādh, may God have mercy on him, said: 'If you cannot be of benefit to the Muslims, then do not harm them; if you cannot please them, then do not abuse them; if you cannot make them happy, then do not make them sorrowful; and if you cannot praise them, then do not disparage them.' My master Muḥyi 'd-Dīn 'Abdal-Qādir al-Jīlānī, may God be pleased with him, said: 'Be with the Truth as if [there were] no creation, and be with creation as if [you had] no ego.' And one of the

Predecessors said: 'People are either afflicted or free [of affliction] so be compassionate to the afflicted and thank God for freedom [from affliction].'

And praise belongs to God, Lord of the Worlds.

Chapter 27

On Repentance, Hope and Fear

You must repent of every single sin, small or great, outward or inward. For repentance is the first step that a servant takes on the Path, and is the foundation of all other stations, as 'God loves the penitent.' He has said, Exalted is He: *Repent to God entirely, O believers, that you may succeed.* [XXIV: 31] And the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The one who repents of a sin is as he who has not sinned.'

Know that repentance cannot be sound unless the sin itself is renounced, remorse is felt, and there is present a determination never to repeat it for the rest of one's life. The true penitent is characterised by signs, among which are a softness of the heart, frequent weeping, adhering to obedience, and forsaking evil companions and places.

Beware of wilful persistence, which is to sin and not repent immediately. It is a believer's duty to guard himself against sins, both small and great, in the way he would against burning fires, engulfing waters or lethal poisons. He should neither commit nor intend a sin, neither talk about it before nor delight in it after it has happened. If he does fall into it he should conceal and hate it, and hasten to repent immediately.

Renew your repentance frequently, for sins are numerous and a servant is never free, outwardly and inwardly, from a great number of rebellious acts, even if his state is good, behaviour upright, and obedience continual. It should suffice you [to know] that the Messenger of God, may blessings and

peace be upon him, infallible and absolutely perfect as he was, repented to God and asked for His forgiveness more than seventy times each day.

Ask for forgiveness repeatedly, night and day, especially in the last hours of the night. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'God will grant the one who perseveres in asking for forgiveness relief from everything that worries him, a way out of every difficulty, and provision from whence he did not expect it.' Say abundantly: '*Rabbi'ghfir lī wa-tub'alayya innaka anta't-tawwāb ar-raḥīm* [Lord forgive me and relent toward me; truly, You are the One who relents, the Merciful!] for the Companions used to hear the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, utter almost a hundred times this blessed invocation in a single session.

Use the prayer of Dhu'n-Nūn,[68] peace be upon him: '*Lā ilāha illā anta subḥānaka innī kuntu min aẓ-ẓālimīn.' [There is no God but You, Transcendent are You! I have been one of the unjust.]* [XXI:87] For it has been related that it contains God's Supreme Name and that no-one who is worried or aggrieved repeats it but that God grants him relief. God the Exalted has said: *We answered him and rescued him from grief, and in such wise do We rescue the believers.* [XXI:88]

Have hope and fear, for these are two of the most noble fruits of faith, and God has attributed them to the Foremost among His servants. He has said, and He is the Most Truthful Speaker: *Those whom they call seek the way to approach their Lord, which of them shall be the nearest; they hope for His mercy and fear His torment; indeed the torment of your Lord should be shunned.* [XVII:57] And the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'God the Exalted has said: "I am as My servant thinks Me to be, let him then think of Me what he will."' And: 'God the Exalted has said: "By My might and majesty, I shall not unite two safeties or two fears in My servant. If he feels secure from Me in the world I shall make him fear on the day I resurrect My servants, but if he fears Me in the world I shall make him secure on the day I gather them together."'

The basis of hope is the heart's knowledge of the immensity of God's mercy and generosity, the magnitude of His favours and kindness, and His gracious promise to those who obey Him. This knowledge generates a state of joyous relief which is termed 'hope', the intended result of which is that one hastens to acts of goodness and is careful in the performance of one's acts of obedience, for obedience is the road to God's Good Pleasure [*Riḍwān*], and His Garden.

The basis of fear is the heart's knowledge of the majesty of God, His invincible might, His independence of any of His creatures, and the severe punishments and painful torments with which He has threatened those who disobey Him and contravene His commands. This knowledge generates a state of apprehension which is termed 'fear', the intended result of which is that one abandons sins and thoroughly guards oneself against them, for sin is the road leading to God's wrath and His place of punishment.

Any hope or fear which does not lead to adherence to obedience and the renunciation of transgressions is considered by the people of inward vision to be useless illusion and folly, for the one who [really] hopes for something seeks it and the one who [really] fears something flees from it invariably.

Know that people are [in this respect] of three kinds. [Firstly,] there is the servant who has committed himself to God, feels secure with Him, and the darkness of whose passions have disappeared with the dawning of the lights of His nearness, so that his only remaining pleasure is to commune with Him, and his only remaining repose to deal with Him. His hope will thus have become yearning and love, and his fear reverence and awe.

[Secondly,] there is the servant who does not feel safe from the neglect of obligations and the inclination towards forbidden things. For him fear and hope should be in equilibrium, just like the wings of a bird. 'Should the fear of a believer and his hope be weighed, they should be found equal.' [*Ḥadīth.*] This is the state of most believers.

[Thirdly,] there is a servant who is overcome by confusion

and heedlessness. What is appropriate for him is constant fear, so that he may be deterred from committing sins. This applies at all times saving that of his death, when hope should predominate, for the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Let none of you die without thinking well of God.'

When you speak of hope with the common people you must confine yourself to conditional hope, that is, you must mention the fine promises and abundant rewards dependent on doing good and avoiding sins. Beware of speaking to them of absolute hope, by saying, for example: 'The servant sins and the Lord forgives.' Or: 'Were it not for sins the clemency and forbearance of God would not have become manifest.' Or: 'The sins of the ancients and the moderns are but a drop in a fathomless sea compared with the immensity of God's mercy,' and other similar things. Such words are true but harmful to the common people, who may be induced to transgress, and you would have been the cause. Not every truth is to be uttered, for there are men appropriate to each degree.

Beware of either despairing of God's mercy or feeling secure from His deception, for both are among the major sins. They only despair of the mercy of their Lord who are astray, and they only feel secure from the deception of God who are the people of perdition.

'Despair' is to be so overwhelmed by fear as to leave absolutely no room for hope, while 'security' is to have so much hope as to leave absolutely no room for fear. The man who has either of the two is ignorant of God, and will inevitably neglect His obedience and transgress. For the one who despairs forsakes obedience because he feels it will be of no avail to him, while the one who is secure commits sins thinking that they will not harm him. We seek God's protection against damnation and against evil destiny.

Beware of those hopes for forgiveness which will sever you therefrom. These you hear from some deluded people who

say that *God forgives all sins* [XXXIX:53], that He stands in no need of us and our works, that His treasures are full of bounty and His mercy envelops everything, but who then persist in committing sins and neglecting good works, as though they were in effect saying that acts of obedience are of no benefit and sins bring no harm. This is a 'formidable falsehood!' God the Exalted has said: *Anyone who does an atom's weight of good will see it, and anyone who does an atom's weight of evil will see it.* [XCIX:7, 8] And: *To God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth, that He may reward those who did wrong with what they did and reward those who did well with goodness.* [LIII:31] And the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'The shrewd man is he who accuses himself and works for that which follows death, and the incompetent is he who follows his soul's passions and harbours [illusory] hopes regarding God.' If you say to one of these deluded people that he should refrain from earning and commerce and God the Exalted will send him his provision, he will ridicule you and reply that he never saw anything come except when sought and pursued, mostly with toil and exertion. Nevertheless, God has guaranteed [his share of] the world for him, but not the hereafter. Is this anything but an inversion of [the truth] and standing upside down on one's own head?

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, may God have mercy on him, has said: 'Hopes for forgiveness have deceived some people until they left the world as bankrupts,' that is, devoid of good works. And he has said, may God have mercy on him: 'The believer conjoins excellent behaviour with fear, while the hypocrite conjoins vile behaviour with security; for the believer wakes up apprehensive and ends his day apprehensive; he works and says: I shall not be saved, I shall not be saved,' and the hypocrite abandons work and says: 'Most people are like this, I will be forgiven.' The Prophets and the saints, perfect as they were in their knowledge of God, their good opinions of Him, good

works, and scarcity or total lack of sins, were nonetheless exceedingly fearful and apprehensive. *They are those whom God has guided, so follow their guidance.* [VI:90]

Chapter 28

On Fortitude

You must show fortitude [*ṣabr*],[69] for it is [one of] this matter's foundations and is inescapable as long as you are in this abode. It is a noble trait and a great virtue. God the Exalted has said: *O you who believe! Seek help in fortitude and prayer; for indeed God is with those who have fortitude.* [II:153] And: *And We made them leaders guiding by Our command when they had fortitude.* [XXXII:24] And: *Indeed those who have fortitude will be paid their wages without stint.* [XXXIX:10] The Messenger of God, many blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Fortitude is the commander of the believer's soldiers.' And: 'There is much good in the patient endurance of that which one finds unpleasant.' And in his advice to Ibn 'Abbās: 'Know that victory comes with fortitude, relief with hardship, and that with each difficulty comes ease.'

Know that happiness depends on the occurrence of nearness to God, which in turn depends on always following the truth and avoiding falsehood. The soul is by its very nature inclined to detest truth and lean towards falsehood. The determination of the seeker of felicity is thus always in need of fortitude, sometimes to force the soul to follow the truth and sometimes to force it to avoid falsehood.

Fortitude is of four kinds:

Firstly, patiently enduring one's perseverance in acts of obedience. This is realized inwardly through sincerity and presence of the heart, and outwardly through holding constantly to them, showing zeal, and performing them in the correct and lawful way. This kind of fortitude is helped by

remembering God's promised rewards, both immediate and to come, for obedience. The man who keeps to this kind of fortitude reaches the station of nearness where he will find indescribable sweetness, pleasure, and intimacy in acts of obedience. The one to whom this happens must not rely on it in preference to God.

Secondly, patient endurance in renouncing sins. This is realized outwardly by avoiding them and by keeping away from the places where they might be committed, and by preventing the soul from discoursing upon them and from inclining to them, for the very beginning of a sin is a thought. As for remembering previous sins, if this results in fear or remorse it is good, if not then refraining from it is better. This kind of fortitude is helped by remembering God's threats of punishment in this world and the next for disobedience. The one who keeps to this kind of fortitude will be honoured by God with finding all disobedience so repugnant that entering the Fire would be easier for him to bear than the committal of the smallest sin.

Thirdly, patient endurance of unpleasant things. These are of two kinds: The first comprises those which come from God without an intermediary, as for example illness, infirmity, loss of wealth, or the death of dear relatives or friends. [This kind of fortitude] is realized inwardly by forsaking restlessness, which is to become annoyed and irritated, and outwardly by not complaining to any creature. This is not incompatible with describing an illness to a physician, or with one's eyes overflowing with tears at a time of loss; but it is, however, incompatible with slapping one's cheeks, rending one's clothes, wailing, and such like. This kind of fortitude is helped by the knowledge that impatience is painful in itself, in addition to its leading to punishment and the loss of reward. Complaining to one who can neither benefit nor protect his own self is foolish, and such are all creatures. Furthermore, to complain is evidence of not finding one's sufficiency in God, *in Whose Hand is the Dominion* [Malakūt] *of all things*, [XXXVI:83] and also of omitting to remember those verses

which relate to the worth of patient endurance of losses, infirmities, and afflictions, and that God the Exalted knows better than a man that which is of most benefit to him. He has said, Exalted is He: *We shall try you with something of fear, hunger, and diminution of wealth, lives, and fruits. And give good tidings to those who have patience, who when stricken by hardship say 'We belong to God, and to Him we shall return!' God will send blessings and mercy on them, those are they who are guided.* [II:155, 156, 157] God will give the one who perseveres in this kind of fortitude to taste the sweetness of surrender and find rest in the serenity of contentment [*riḍā*]. We will mention contentment, God willing, in due course.

The second kind of unpleasant things comprises those which are caused by other men, whether by way of offences to oneself and one's honour, or of some act of withholding. Complete fortitude in this regard means preventing oneself from hating the offender, if he is a Muslim, or wishing him to come to harm, preventing one's tongue from praying to God against him, and not reproaching him at all, which thing should be accomplished either by forbearance and fortitude, through one's reliance on God's assistance, or by reconciliation, in the wish for His reward. This kind of patience is helped by knowledge of that which has been handed down regarding the merit which is in suppressing one's anger, enduring injuries, and forgiving others. God the Exalted has said: *The wage of the one who is forgiving and reconciling falls on God, He does not love the unjust. And whoso defends himself after he has suffered wrong, for such there is no way [of blame] against them. The way [of blame] is only against those who oppress men, and transgress in the earth without right, for such there is a painful torment. But those who endure patiently and forgive, indeed that is the great thing.* [XLII: 40, 41, 42, 43] The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'God fills the heart of the one who suppresses his anger when able to carry out its demands with serenity and faith.' And: 'A herald will call on the Day of Rising: "Let those whose reward must be granted by God arise!" and there shall arise those men who were forgiving of others.'

The one who perseveres in this kind of fortitude will be honoured by God with a goodly character, which is the source of all virtues and the foundation of all perfections. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Nothing shall weigh more heavily in the Balance than a goodly character; a servant may attain through his goodly character the rank of the one who [frequently] prays and fasts.' And: 'The ones I shall love most and who will sit the closest to me on the Day of Rising are those among you who are the best in character.' Ibn al-Mubārak, may God have mercy on him, said: 'Good character is to have an engaging face, to be generous with good works, and to refrain from doing harm.' And the *imām* al-Ghazālī, may God spread his benefit, has said: 'Good character is a disposition deeply ingrained in the soul from which beautiful acts spring easily.'

Fourthly, patient renunciation of desires, which are all those boastfully worldly things to which the soul inclines. Perfect patient denial is attained by inwardly stopping the soul from thinking and leaning towards them, and outwardly restraining it from seeking or coming close to them. This kind of fortitude is helped by knowledge of the distraction from God and His worship which comes from seeking and fulfilling desires, the risks of falling into the suspect and prohibited things and the arousal of greed for the world and the wish to remain therein so as to be able to enjoy its pleasures. Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī has said: 'To abandon a single desire is of more benefit to the heart than a year's worship.' God will honour the one who grows accustomed to denying himself his desires by removing the love of these things from his heart until he attains the state described by a certain gnostic, who said: 'My desire is that I should not desire, so that I may abandon that which I do not desire, and thus not be deprived of that which I desire.'[70]

And providential success is from God!

Chapter 29

On Gratitude

You must thank God for all that He has favoured you with. You have no good thing, whether outward or inward, religious or worldly, but that it comes from Him. He has said, Exalted is He: *Whatever good thing you have is from God.* [XVI:53] God's favours upon you are more than you can number or be aware of, let alone adequately thank Him for. *If you would count the favours of God you cannot number them.* [XIV:34] If the poor and sick among the people of Monotheism reflected on God's favours upon them they would become too intoxicated by giving thanks to feel the hardship of patient endurance. You should do as much as you can to thank your Lord, and confess your total incapacity to do so adequately.

Know that thankfulness leads to the perpetuation of favours already received and to the obtaining of others that are desired. God the Exalted has said: *If you give thanks, I shall surely increase you.* [XIV:7] He is, Exalted is He, too Generous to take away a favour from someone who is thanking Him. He has said, Exalted is He: *That is because God never changes a blessing He has bestowed on any people until they first change that which is in themselves,* [VIII:51] that is, their neglecting to give thanks. And God has exhorted His servants to render thanks to Him many times in His Book: *Eat of the good things with which We have provided you, and give thanks to God if it is indeed Him that you worship.* [II:172] *Eat of the provision of your Lord and give thanks to Him.* [XXXIV:15] And the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Let each of you have an invoking tongue and a thankful heart.' And: 'Faith has two halves: one is patience and the other thankfulness.'

Know that just as you must thank God for favours which are proper to you, such as knowledge and health, you must also thank Him for favours which are general, such as the sending of Messengers, the revelation of Books, raising up the sky, and stretching out the earth.

The basis of thankfulness is that the heart be aware of such favours, that they are from God alone, and that nothing comes to one through one's own ability and power, but only through God's grace and mercy. The limit of thankfulness is to use each one of His favours in His obedience; if you do not do so you will have neglected to give thanks for it, and if you use them to disobey Him you will have fallen into ingratitude, whereby favours turn into afflictions. Anyone who still enjoys some favours while using them in disobedience to God is being lured. God the Exalted has said: *We shall lure them from whence they do not know.* [LXVIII:44] And: *We only give them rein that they may grow in sinfulness.* [III:178] Similarly, 'God gives rein to the wrongdoer until, when He takes him, He does not let him go.' [*Ḥadīth.*]

It is part of thankfulness to praise God frequently, and to rejoice for the favours bestowed, because they are means of attaining to the propinquity of God, and because they are evidence of God's solicitude for His servant.

It is part of thankfulness, too, to make much of His favours, even those that are small. It is related that God once said to one of His Prophets: 'Whensoever I grant you a poor grain of wheat, know that I have remembered you thereby; therefore thank Me for it.'

It is part of thankfulness likewise to speak of God's favours without, however, digressing into anything that might suggest self-righteousness in religious matters or insolence in matters of the world. Deeds are according to the intentions behind them. And all good comes from following our virtuous predecessors in all circumstances; and God knows best.

Chapter 30

On Renunciation

You must renounce the world, for renunciation is the forerunner of felicity, the manifestation of Providence, and the sign of sanctity. Just as loving the world is the origin of all sins, so also is hating it the origin of all obedience and excellence. It is enough to make you renounce the world to know that in numerous passages in His Book God has called it the *Comfort of Illusion*,[71] and that Al-Ḥasan, may God have mercy on him, said: 'It is as the greenness of vegetation and the toys of girls.'[72] And Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, may God have mercy on him, said: 'The *Comfort of Illusion* is a name for a putrefying carcass.' And God the Exalted defined the world as being but a distraction and play to which no intelligent person should pay any attention and to which only ignorant fools are attracted. *The life of the world is nothing but play and distraction.* [VI:32]

Know that to renounce the world is an immediate felicity, and that only those whose breasts God has opened up by the dawning of the lights of gnosis and certainty are capable of it. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'When light enters the heart it opens up and is enlarged.' [The Companions] said: 'Is there any sign for that?' and he replied: 'Yes, to shun the abode of illusion and attend to the abode of immortality.' And he said: 'Renouncing the world relieves the heart and the body, while desire for the world increases worry and sorrow.' And: 'Renounce the world, and God will love you.'

The origin of renunciation is the heart's knowledge of the vileness and insignificance of the world, and that 'had it been

worth so much as a gnat's wing to God He would not have given a disbeliever a sip of its water', and that 'it is accursed and all that it contains except that which is for God'; and that anyone who takes more than is necessary from it is unwittingly taking his own destruction. The intended result of such knowledge is to abandon inwardly desire for the world, and to abandon outwardly delighting in its pleasures. The lowest degree of renunciation is that one is not induced by the world to commit a sin, nor to neglect any act of obedience, while the highest degree is that you take nothing from it unless you know that to take it is more pleasing to God than to leave it. There are many degrees between these two.

Sincere renunciation has many marks. Among these is that one does not rejoice for what one has nor mourn for what one has not, and that the pursuit and enjoyment of the world do not distract one from that which is better for one in the sight of his Lord.

Remove the love of dinars and of dirhams from your heart until they become as pebbles and sand in your eyes. Remove the wish to be thought highly of from your heart until you are indifferent to people's praise and condemnation, and to whether they are attracted or repulsed by you. For the love of prominence is more harmful than that of money, and both indicate desire for the world.

The basis of the love of prominence is to love being considered great by others. Now greatness is one of God's attributes, and this thing is therefore disputing His Lordship.

The basis of the love of money is the love of enjoying one's desires, and this is an attribute of animals. The Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'God the Exalted says: "Greatness is My lower garment and Pride My upper garment. I shall cast anyone who disputes with Me with regard to either of them into the fire of Hell."' And: 'Two hungry wolves let loose into the sheep's fold will not devastate it more than do the love of prominence and money a Muslim's religion.'

Take little from the world always, and confine yourself to

your needs, whether it be in the matter of clothes, food, marriage, housing, or any other comfort. Beware of indulgently seeking its pleasures while claiming to renounce it, using arguments unacceptable to God, and contriving interpretations which are far removed from the truth. The way in which the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, and the Prophets before him, and the leaders after him, shunned the world's pleasures while able to enjoy them licitly is quite obvious to anyone who has the least knowledge.

If you are incapable of renouncing the world and you admit your desire for it, you are not to blame; you will only have sinned if you pursue and enjoy it in a manner forbidden by the Law. Renunciation is a degree higher than this. Would that I knew, even had God the Exalted made it obligatory on us to take liberally from the world, where we would have found the ability to do so at a time when it has become arduous to find even a licit garment with which to cover oneself decently, and enough licit food to allay one's hunger?

We are God's and to Him we shall return. [II:156]

Chapter 31

On Reliance on God

You must rely on God, for He suffices, enriches, and concerns Himself with those who do so. *And the one who relies on God, God will suffice him.* [LXV:3]

Reliance[73] [on God] is one of the fruits of a sincere Monotheism which is well established and has prevailed in the heart. God the Exalted has said: *Lord of the East and Lord of the West, there is no god but Him, so take Him as a Patron.* [LXXIII: 9.] Notice how He began by affirming Lordship, and then the exclusive Oneness of Divinity, and then ordered us to rely on Him (Majestic and High is He!) so that no man has any excuse to forsake this. And He has commanded His servants to rely on Him and encouraged them to do so in His saying: *And upon God let the believers rely.* [III:122] And: *So rely on God, indeed God loves those who rely [on Him].* [III:159] And the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, has said: 'Were you to rely on God as He rightly should be relied on, He would provide for you as He provides for the birds which go off hungry in the morning and return full in the evening.'

Know that the basis of reliance on God is the heart's knowledge that all matters are in God's Hand, whether beneficial or harmful, unpleasant or pleasant, and that were all creatures to unite to be of benefit to someone they would benefit him only in the way which God has already written for him; and that if they were to unite to harm him they would do so only in that which God has already written for him.

It is a condition for sound reliance that it does not lead you to disobey God, and that you avoid what He has forbidden and

perform what He has commanded, relying in all this on Him, seeking [only] His assistance and committing yourself to Him. Using any of the world's means does not invalidate your reliance as long as you rely on God and not on that which you use. Certainly, for the one whose reliance is sincere, his use of worldly means will become meagre. As for totally divesting oneself of them, this is praiseworthy only for those whose approach to God is uninterrupted, whose hearts are purified from attending to anything other than Him, and who do not by so doing cause those of God's creatures whom they support to be lost. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'It is sufficient sin for a man that he should cause those whom he supports to be lost.'

Know that storing things and the treatment of illnesses do not compromise the essence of reliance for those who know that the One Who enriches, benefits, and harms is God alone. The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, stored things for those in his charge to demonstrate that it was allowable; as for himself, he never stored anything for the morrow; and if someone else stored something for him he forbade him as soon as he came to know of it. When he was asked, may blessings and peace be upon him, about the seventy thousand from his nation who would enter the Garden without first being judged, he said: 'They are those who have no recourse to charms, or cauterisation, or necromancy, and rely on their Lord.'

The one whose reliance is sincere has three marks. The first is that he neither has hopes in nor fears other than God. The sign of this is that he upholds the truth in the presence of those in whose regard people usually have hope or fear, such as princes and rulers. The second is that worrying about his sustenance never enters his heart, because of his confidence in God's guarantee, so that his heart is as tranquil when in need as when his need has been fulfilled, or even more. The third is that his heart does not become disturbed in fearful situations, knowing that that which has missed him could never have struck him, and that which has struck him could never have

missed him. An example of this was related of my lord ʿAbdal-Qādir al-Jīlānī, may God spread his benefit. He was once discoursing on Destiny when a great viper fell on him, so that his audience panicked. The viper coiled itself around the shaykh's neck, then entered one of his sleeves and came out from the other while he remained firm and unperturbed, and did not interrupt his discourse. Another shaykh who was once thrown to a lion but came to no harm was asked: 'What were you thinking about when thrown to the lion?' He replied: 'The legal ruling concerning lion leftovers.'[74]

God is our sufficiency and He is the Best of Patrons. [III: 173]

Chapter 32

On Divine Love and Contentment

You must love God until He becomes (Transcendent is He!) dearer to you than all else, and until you have no other beloved but Him. The cause for the presence of love is either a perfection existing in the beloved or something that one receives from him. If you are one in whom love is caused by perfection, then [know that] perfection, majesty, and beauty are God's alone, and that He has no associates in them. Any perfection or beauty seen in any existing thing comes from God's perfecting or beautifying it, for He has created and designed it, and had He not favoured it with existence it would have been unperceived, non-existent; and but for the effusion of the lights of the beauty of His making upon it it would have been a thing inauspicious indeed.[75] If, however, you are one who loves because of what you receive, then [know that] there is no graciousness, favour, honour, or provision bestowed upon you or any other creature but that God the Exalted has favoured you with it purely through His generosity and liberality. How many a good thing has He given you! How many a favour has He granted you! He is your Lord and Guardian, Who created and guided you, to whom your life and your death belong, Who gives you to eat and drink, Who provides and looks after you, Who shelters you and gives you refuge. He sees your ugly behaviour and conceals it; you ask Him to forgive you and He does so, and He sees your righteous behaviour and increases and manifests it. You obey Him by

His providence and aid and He mentions your name in the Unseen,[76] and casts respect and love for you into the hearts of others. You disobey Him using His favours, yet disobedience does not make Him withhold His favours. How can you love other than this Generous God? Or how could you disobey this Compassionate Lord?

Know that the basis of love is knowledge, and that its fruit is contemplation [*mushāhada*]. Its lowest degree is that the love of God should be supreme in your heart, and the test of sincerity here is to disobey the person whom you love should he invite you to that which would incur God's anger such as sins or the neglect of acts of obedience. Its uppermost degree is that there remain in your heart not the slightest love for other than God. This is a rare and precious thing, and to persist therein is even more so. When it persists the human attributes fade away completely and an absorption in God obtains which leaves no room for any awareness of the existent universe and its people.

Know that love for the Messenger of God, and all of God's other Prophets, angels, and virtuous servants, and all who assist in His obedience, is part of one's love for Him. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'Love God for the favours He grants you, and love me for the love of God, and love the people of my house for my love.' And: 'God has said: "My love is due to those who love each other for My sake, who sit with each other for My sake, who visit each other for My sake, and who give to each other for My sake."'

Sincere love has signs, the greatest and highest of which is perfection in one's following the Messenger in his speech, acts, and attributes. God the Exalted has said: *Say: If you love God, then follow me and God will love you.* [III:31]. Following God's Beloved is in proportion to one's love for God; if the latter is abundant then the former will be abundant likewise, while if the latter is little, the former will be little also. *And God is witness to what we say.* [XXVIII:28]

You must be content with God's decrees, for this contentment is among the most noble consequences of love and gnosis. It is the attribute of the lover to be pleased with the acts

of his Beloved, whether they be sweet or bitter. The Prophet has said, may blessings and peace be upon him, that God says: 'Anyone who is not content with My decrees and cannot patiently endure My trials, let him seek a lord other than I!' And the Prophet said: 'When God loves a people He afflicts them, the one who is content receives [His] contentment and the one who is angry receives [His] anger.'

Your duty, O believer, is to know and believe that God the Exalted is the One Who causes guidance and misguidance, misery and happiness, and nearness and remoteness; He gives and withholds, abases and exalts, and causes harm and benefit. Having known and believed in this your duty is never to object, whether outwardly or inwardly, to any of His acts. To object means to say: 'Why was that?' and 'What for?' 'Why was it not like this or that? What did so-and-so do to deserve this?' There can be none more ignorant than he who raises objections to the way God deals with His kingdom or disputes His sovereignty, while remaining aware that God the Exalted is the Unique Creator, Authority, Sovereign, and Manager, Who does what He wills and decides what He wishes, Who *cannot be asked to account for what He does, while they* [i.e. His creatures] *can.* [XXI:23.] On the contrary, you must believe that everything that God does cannot be done in a wiser, more equitable, better, or more perfect way.

Such is, in general terms, contentment with God's acts. To be more specific, matters which concern you are of two kinds: [Firstly,] those which suit you, such as good health and prosperity. Resentment is inconceivable here except through looking at those who possess more of these things than you do; your duty then is to be content with what God has allotted you because His is the right to do as He pleases in His kingdom, or better still because He has chosen what is best and most suitable for your circumstances. [Secondly,] that which does not suit you, such as misfortunes, illnesses, and infirmities. It is then forbidden that you be discontented and restless in this regard; it is better to accept these things contentedly and surrender [to God's will]. If you cannot, then patiently endure

for the sake of God. 'Worship God by being content, and if you cannot, then know that in the patient endurance of that which is unpleasant lies much good.' [*Ḥadīth.*]

Certain wealthy people neglect some duties and commit some transgressions and yet feel secure; this has nothing at all to do with contentment, for disobedience and neglect of one's duties are causes of God's wrath, so how can one be content with that which displeases Him? *If you are ungrateful, God is independent of you, and He is not pleased with ingratitude in His servants; but if you are thankful He approves of it for you.* [XXXIX:7] Such wretched people are pleased only with themselves, but think they are pleased with their Lord! Being pleased with oneself and being pleased with one's Lord are far apart and never unite in the same place.

How excellent is that which the *imām* al-Ghazālī, may God be pleased with him, wrote to Abu'l-Fatḥ al-Dimashqī, may God have mercy on him: 'Contentment is to be content inwardly with God's acts, and outwardly to do what pleases Him.'

Should a servant wish to know how much contentment he has, then let him search for it when hardships arrive, afflictions descend, and sicknesses become severe, for in these circumstances he will either find it or not.

One frequently hears the villains of today replying when asked about why they abandoned obedience and committed transgressions, 'This is something which God has predestined us to do; we cannot avoid it, and are but subjugated slaves.' This is the Fatalistic [*Jabrīya*][77] outlook, and those who hold such an opinion are implying, although not explicitly saying, that there was no point in sending Messengers and revealing Books. How can someone who claims to have faith argue in favour of himself and against his Lord, when God's is the most profound argument against all His creatures? And how can a believer be willing to imitate the polytheists who said: *Had God so wished we would not have associated [anything with Him] nor would our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything.* [VI:148] Has he not heard God's reply to them through His

Prophet: *Say: Have you any knowledge that you can exhibit for us? You follow nothing but conjectures; you only guess.* [VI:48] And even the idolaters when they return to God will not be able to use such an untenable argument; on the contrary they will say: *Our Lord! Our evil fortune overwhelmed us and we were people astray.* [XXIII:106] *Our Lord! We have now seen and heard, send us back and we will do right, we are now convinced!* [XXXII:12]

Know that supplication even with insistence does not compromise contentment; on the contrary, it is a part of it. How can it not be so when prayer expresses true faith in God's unity, is the language of servitude, and the hallmark of the realization of helplessness, neediness, humility, and poverty? Anyone who has realized these attributes has attained to knowledge and arrival, and to the utmost nearness to God. It has been related that the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, said that prayer is the marrow of worship, the weapon of the believer, and the light of the heavens and earth; and that those who do not ask God incur His wrath. Our Lord (Majestic is His power!) has said: *To God belong the most beautiful Names; thus call on Him by them!* [VII:180] And: *Your Lord has said: Pray to Me and I will answer you.* [XL:60]

That which happened to the Intimate Friend, peace be on him, who was cast into the fire and refrained from praying,[78] was due to a secret concerning the particular state he was in. God has related many of his prayers in numerous passages of His Book; in fact He has related more from him than from any other Prophet. Thus study the Book of God and extract the sciences from it, for they have all been set within it, whether minute or immense, manifest or hidden. God the Exalted has said: *We have neglected nothing in the Book.* [VI:38] And: *We revealed the Book to you as an exposition of all things, a guidance, a mercy, and good tidings for the believers.* [XVI:90]

Conclusion

We give here some Divine injunctions handed down as Holy Traditions [*aḥādīth qudsīya*], and sound *ḥadīths*.

The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, repeating the words of his Lord, said: 'O My servants! I have forbidden Myself injustice, and made it forbidden between you, so do not be unjust to each other! O My servants! You are all hungry save those whom I feed; therefore ask Me and I shall feed you! O My servants! You are all naked save those whom I clothe; therefore ask Me and I shall clothe you! O My servants! You do wrong night and day, and I forgive all sins; so ask Me and I shall forgive you! O My servants! You will never be able to benefit or harm Me. O My servants! Were the first of you and the last, the humans and the jinn, to become equal to the most pious of heart among you, it would add nothing to My kingdom. O My servants! Were the first of you and the last, the humans and the jinn, to become equal to the most depraved of heart among you, it would detract nothing from My kingdom. O My servants! Were the first of you and the last, the humans and the jinn, to stand on one plain and ask Me, and were I to grant each his request, it would diminish that which I possess no more than would a needle when dipped into the sea. O My servants! It is but your deeds which I record for you, then give you full requital; therefore let him who finds good praise God, and him who does not, blame only himself.'

And he has said, may blessings and peace be upon him: 'I once saw my Lord in a dream,' and related the *ḥadīth* until he said: 'He said: "O Muhammad!" I said: "At your service!" He said: "When you pray, declare: 'O God! I ask You to grant me acts of goodness, the renunciation of foul deeds, and love for the poor; and that if You intend to tempt Your servants that You take me to You untempted.'"'

And: 'God the Exalted has said: "O son of Adam! Get up for Me and I shall walk to you; walk to Me and I shall run to you. O son of Adam! Remember Me for a while at the day's beginning and a while at its end and I shall suffice you for whatever lies in between. O son of Adam! Do not fail to pray four *rak'as* at the beginning of the day; I shall suffice you thereby for its end."'

God revealed to Adam, upon whom be peace: 'Four things contain all that is good for you and your offspring. One of these is for Me, one for you, one between you and Me, and one between you and My servants. As for the one that is Mine, it is that you worship Me and associate none with Me; as for the one that is yours, this is your deeds, for which I reward you; as for the one that is between you and Me, it is that your place is to pray and Mine to answer; and as for the one that is between you and My servants, it is that you treat them as you would like them to treat you.'

It is written [in the scrolls] of Abraham, upon whom be peace: 'The intelligent man should hold his tongue, know his times, and attend to his business. He should have four hours: one to commune with his Lord, one to call himself to account, one to see his brothers who help and assist him, and one when he releases his soul to its [lawful] pleasures.'

In the Torah [it is written]: 'O son of Adam! Do not fail to stand before Me in prayer, for I am God and have drawn near to your heart, and in the Unseen did you behold My Light.'[79]

And in another of God's revealed Books [it is written]: 'O son of Adam! I have created you to worship Me, so do not play games, and guaranteed your sustenance, so do not tire yourself. O son of Adam! Seek Me and you shall find Me, and when you find Me you will have found everything, but if you miss Me you will have missed all things, for I am dearer to you than all else. O son of Adam! I am God Who says to the thing, "Be!" and it is. Obey Me and I shall give you to say to the thing, "Be!" and it is.'

And God revealed to Moses, upon whom be peace: 'O son of 'Imrān! Be alert, take some brothers for yourself, for any

intimate friend or companion who does not help you to please Me is your enemy. O Moses! What have you to do with the abode of the unjust? It is no abode for you! Drive its anxieties from yourself, and divide yourself from it with your heart, for an evil place it is, save for those who do good, for whom it is a place of excellency. O Moses! I shall watch the wrongdoer until I give to those he wronged their rights from him. O Moses! When you see affluence approaching say: "A sin the punishment of which has been hastened!" and when you see poverty approaching say: "Welcome to the emblem of the virtuous!" O Moses! Do not forget My remembrance, for with forgetfulness do sins increase. And do not amass wealth, for to do so hardens the heart. O Moses! Tell the wrongdoers not to remember Me, for if they remember Me I shall remember them with a curse, for I have imposed upon Myself that I shall remember those who remember Me.'

God revealed to one of His Prophets, upon all of whom be peace: 'Tell your people not to do as My enemies do, not to engage in what My enemies engage in, and not to eat of the food of My enemies, so that they do not become My enemies just as the others are My enemies.'

And God revealed to David, upon whom be peace: 'Find intimacy with Me and be estranged from all else. O David! Tell the True Saints among My servants to rejoice in Me and delight in My remembrance. O David! Cause My servants to love Me!' And he asked: 'O Lord! How may I cause them to love You?' And He replied: 'Remind them of My favours. O David! The one who returns a runaway to Me I declare an arduous worker [for My sake]. O David! When you see a man who seeks Me then be a servant to him. O David! Do not inquire about Me from a scholar whom the world has intoxicated, for he will bar you from My Path; such are to My servants like highwaymen. O David! Behave as do the righteous, smile at the depraved, be altogether sincere with My friends, and opposed to My enemies. O David! Be as a compassionate father to widows and orphans and I shall increase your provision and remit your sins. O David! Lower

your eyes and hold your tongue, for I do not like the corrupt, and plea abundantly for forgiveness for yourself and all sinners.'

God revealed to one of His Prophets, upon all of whom be peace: 'Remember Me when you are angry and I shall remember you when I give, and thus not annihilate you along with those I annihilate.'

And God revealed to Jesus, upon whom be peace: 'Tell the Children of Israel not to enter any of My houses save with pure hearts, humble eyes, and Godfearing hands. Give them to know that I shall not answer any of their prayers while they still owe any creature [reparation for] an injustice.' And: 'O son of Mary! Counsel yourself; and then if you take heed, counsel the people; if not then be ashamed before Me.'

It has been related that God the Exalted has said: 'Tell those who study for other than a religious purpose, and learn but not to practice, who put on the garments of intelligence to impress others, whose language is sweeter than honey and whose hearts are more bitter than aloes:[80] "Is it in regard to Me that they are beguiled? Is it Me that they defy? I swear that I shall send against them a trial that will leave the intelligent among them dazed."'

God revealed to Moses, upon whom be peace: 'When you see the poor call them to account just as you call the wealthy. If you do not, then bury everything that I have taught you under the dust.'

And God revealed to David, upon whom be peace: 'O David! Tell My friends and beloved ones to forsake their companions, for I shall comfort them with My remembrance, speak to them intimately, and remove the veil between Myself and them, that they may behold My Glory. Speak of Me, O David, to the people of the earth, and tell them that I am the lover of the one who loves Me, the companion of the one who sits with Me, the comfort of the one who seeks comfort in Me, the friend of the one who befriends Me; I obey the one who obeys Me, and choose the one who chooses Me. So come to be honoured by Me; keep My company and deal with Me, for I

am God, the Liberal, the Glorious. I say to a thing: "Be!" and it is.'

And God revealed to one of His Prophets, upon all of whom be peace: 'Servant of Mine! Give Me the tears of your eyes and the reverence of your heart, then call Me and I shall respond to you, for I am the Near, the Responsive. Servant of Mine! Go forth to the cities and the fortresses and tell them two things on My behalf: tell them to eat nothing but good [licit] food, and to say nothing but the truth. And if one of them wishes to engage in an activity let him think of its consequences; if these are good, then let him proceed, while if they are bad, then let him refrain.'

And God revealed to Jesus, upon whom be peace: 'Tell the Children of Israel to heed these two things from Me: tell them to be content with but little of this world for the good of their religion, even as the people of the world are content with but little of religion for the good of their world.'

God revealed to Moses, upon whom be peace: 'Be as a lone bird which eats from the treetops, drinks plain water, and when night falls seeks refuge in a cave, seeking intimacy with Me, feeling estranged from those who disobey Me. O Moses! I have imposed it upon Myself that I shall not allow the works of those who draw away from Me to be completed. I shall disappoint those whose hopes are in other than Me, and I shall break the backs of those who seek support from other than Me, and I shall cause to be estranged those who love other than Me. O Moses! I have servants to whom I listen when they speak to Me, to whom I come when they call Me, whom I bring closer when they approach Me, whom I protect when they draw nearer, whose side I take when they take Mine, to whom I am sincere when they are sincere with Me, whom I reward when they act, whose affairs I manage, and whose hearts and states I govern. I gave their hearts to find tranquillity only in My remembrance; which is the cure of their sicknesses, and the light of their hearts. They find solace only in Me, they allow their hearts to rest with Me alone, and are settled only when going towards Me.'

And God revealed to David, upon whom be peace: 'O David! Give good tidings to the sinners and warn the True Saints!' He asked; 'O Lord! How shall I give tidings to the sinners and warn the True Saints?' He said: 'Give the glad tidings to the sinners that no sin is too great for Me to forgive, and warn the True Saints not to admire their own works, for were I to impose My justice and judgement on anyone he would surely be doomed. O David! I have prescribed mercy upon Myself, and decreed forgiveness for those who ask for it; I forgive all sins, small and great, which can be neither too abundant nor too great for Me; therefore do not doom yourself, or despair of My mercy, for My mercy has outstripped My wrath. The treasuries of the heavens and the earth are in My Hand, as is all goodness; I have created nothing out of need for it, but only that My power might become known, and that all beholders might know the wisdom of My design and creation. O David, hear Me! Verily I say: When My servant who, ashamed of his sins, comes to meet Me, I cause his guardians[81] to forget them and not ask him about them. O David, hear Me! Verily I say: Were one of My servants persistently to commit enough sins to fill the world, and then regret this, and ask for My forgiveness just once, and I knew that in his heart he intended never to repeat them, I would cast them off him more swiftly than a bird falls down from the sky to the ground.' And David said: 'O my God, praise belongs to You on this account! None who knows You should lose hope in You.'

O God! Give us from Your Presence a great reward, lead us along a straight path, let us be with those on whom You have bestowed Your favours: *the Prophets, the True Saints, the martyrs, and the virtuous,* for *they are the best companions.* [IV:60]

This is God's grace, and God is sufficient as Knower. [IV:70]

This is the end of the treatise. Praise belongs to God firstly and lastly, inwardly and outwardly; *He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward, and He has knowledge of everything.* [LVII:3]

It is God's will. No strength is there, but by God, the High, the Formidable.

Praise and thanks belong to God Who led us to this. We would never have been guided had He not guided us. [VII:43]

It was concluded in the year 1099 of the Emigration of the Prophet, who is our lord, master, and means to our Lord, Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, may the best of blessings and peace be upon him and upon his house as long as nights and days remain.

And praised be God, Lord of the Worlds!

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1 II:32
2 *The month of Ramadan in which the Qur'ān was revealed, a guidance for mankind, and clear indications for guidance and discernment.* [II:185]
3 *He has ordained for you that religion which He commended unto Noah, and that which We revealed to you, and that which We commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus.* [XLII:13]
4 *You are the best nation that has been brought out for mankind. You enjoin good and forbid evil, and you believe in God.* [III:110]
5 *Help one another in benevolence and* taqwā *and do not help one another in sin and aggression; indeed God is severe in punishment.* [V:2]
6 *By the declining Day! Man is indeed in a state of loss, except those who believe and do good works, and exhort each other to truth and exhort each other to fortitude.* [CIII:1, 2, 3]
7 *Mulk*, the visible world. *Malakūt*, the invisible, subtle worlds.
8 XII:53
9 *Shirk*: Association of other deities with God. It is rendered as polytheism or idolatry according to the context.
10 In *sūrat al-Wāqi'a* (The Event) [LVI] people are classified into three kinds: those on the right, those on the left, and the foremost, who are the Ones Brought Nigh. The People of the Right Hand are the multitude of common believers who will enter the Garden and be spared the Fire, they are said to be: *A multitude of those of old and a multitude of those of later time.* [LVI:39,40]. The People of the Left Hand are those who will enter the Fire. And the Foremost are those who reach the end of the spiritual path and attain to gnosis, they are said to be: *A multitude of those of old and a few of those of later time.* [LVI:13,14]
11 The True Saints (*ṣiddīqūn*) are the very highest among saints, whose rank is immediately below that of the Prophets. They are the utterly sincere who, having withheld nothing from God, are withheld nothing of His grace.
12 'Abd-Allāh ibn 'Abbās was the son of the Prophet's uncle al-'Abbās, and one of the seven Companions who have transmitted over one thousand *ḥadīths* each.
13 X:61
14 XX:7
15 LVII:4

16 LIV:55

17 The Proof of Islam (*Ḥujjat ul-Islām*) is the *imām* Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. Born in Ṭūs in Khorasan in 450 H, he wrote about two hundred books and treatises, the most important and best known of which is *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* [*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*]. He died in 505 H.

18 Opening (*fatḥ*): Victory in a general sense. The same word can be used for the conquest of a city, the dispelling of hardships, the achievement of success in any endeavour, and the unveiling of the Eye of the Heart so that it begins to perceive the Unseen; it is usually in this latter sense that the term is used in Sufi texts.

19 The Seven Saving Ones are the following seven suras: *Al-Sajda* (The Prostration), *Yā-Sīn*, *Al-Dukhān* (Smoke), *Al-Wāqi'a* (The Event), *Al-Ḥashr* (The Gathering), *Al-Mulk* (Sovereignty), and *Al-Insān* (Man).

20 The 'People' (*Al-Qawm*) is an expression used to designate the Sufis, particularly the masters among them. It was originally taken from a *ḥadīth qudsī* where the descent of angels to gatherings of *dhikr* is described, with God's forgiveness embracing all present, including those who just happened to be there for incidental worldly reasons, because the people of *dhikr* are 'the people whose companions never suffer wretchedness.'

21 *O you who believe! Let not your wealth or your children distract you from the remembrance of God; those who do so are the losers. And spend of that which We have provided you with before death comes to one of you and he says: 'My Lord! If only You would reprieve me for a little while, then I would give charity and be among the virtuous.' But God will not reprieve a soul whose time has come, and God is Aware of what you do.* [LXIII:9, 10, 11]

22 *As for the one who gave, had* taqwā, *and believed in goodness, We shall ease him into ease, but he who is miserly and thinks himself independent, and disbelieves in goodness, We shall ease him into hardship; nor will his wealth profit him when he plummets down. Ours it is to guide and to Us belong the Last and the First. I therefore warn you of a blazing fire, where only the wretched will be immersed, those who deny and turn away. Those who have* taqwā *will be spared it, those who spend their wealth to purify themselves, and none receive any favour from them except seeking the Face of their Lord Most High, and they will be satisfied.* [XCII:5 to 21]

23 *The believers are those who, when God is mentioned, their hearts tremble, and when His signs are recited to them, their faith grows, and who rely on their Lord. Those who establish the ritual prayer, and spend [freely] of what We have provided them with; those, in truth, are the believers, who will have degrees with their Lord, and forgiveness, and generous provision.* [VIII:2, 3, 4]

24 *Hypocrite men and hypocrite women proceed from one another; they enjoin evil and forbid good, and they withhold their hands. They forget God, so He has forgotten them. Indeed, the hypocrites are the transgressors. God promises the*

hypocrites, both men and women, and the disbelievers the fire of Hell for their abode; it will suffice them. God curses them, and theirs is a lasting torment. [IX:67, 68]

25 *Believing men and believing women are helping friends to each other. They enjoin good and forbid evil, establish the prayer, give the zakāt, and obey God and His Messenger. God will have mercy on them; He is indeed Mighty, Wise. God has promised believing men and believing women gardens underneath which rivers flow, perpetually therein, and pleasant dwellings in Gardens of Eden, and Good Pleasure from God, which is greater; that is the supreme gain.* [IX:71, 72]

26 *Those who do not expect to meet Us, are content with the life of the world and feel secure therein, and those who are heedless of Our signs, their refuge is the Fire, for what they have been earning. Indeed, those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, their Lord will guide them for their belief; beneath them rivers flowing in gardens of bliss; their prayer therein is, Transcendent are You O God! Their greeting is, Peace! And the end of their prayer is, Praised be God, the Lord of the Worlds!* [X: 7, 8, 9, 10]

27 The fortunate are those whose destiny it is to be believers, behave in ways pleasing to God, and whose ultimate fate is salvation.

28 The wretched are those whose destiny it is to be disbelievers, either throughout their lives or, because of their corruption, at the instant of death, and who are therefore damned.

29 XX:107

30 XXII:11

31 *Men whom neither commerce nor transactions distract from the remembrance of God, from establishing the prayer and giving the zakāt, who fear a day when hearts and eyes shall be turned about.* [XXIV: 37]

32 *Say: This is my way, I summon to God clear-sightedly, I and those who follow me.* [XII:108]

33 This unawareness of the elite is said by *sayyid* Aḥmad Mashhūr al-Ḥaddād to be in no wise reprehensible, since it is imposed on them by the Real because of the particular pattern of the times.

34 i.e. those who oppose them will never be able to stamp out the light of Islam of which they are the custodians. As to harm coming to them personally, that has been a fairly frequent occurrence as evidenced by what happened to the *imām* Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, may God be pleased with him, and many others.

35 *Imām* Aḥmad ibn 'Isā al-Muhājir was one of the most knowledgeable and saintly members of the House of the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him. His title, al-*Muhājir*, the Emigrant, meant primarily that he had forsaken the world and travelled the path to God, and secondarily that he had emigrated from 'Irāq to Ḥaḍramaut where his descendants became the illustrious 'Alawī *sādāt*. When he reached Ḥaḍramaut in about 318 H, the land was poor, unsafe, and dominated

by the Ibāḍiya, an extremist sect. He summoned the people to God, established the *sunna*, and adopted the Shāfiʿī school of law. He died in 345 H. having lived about a hundred years.

36 *Iḥya' 'ulūm al-dīn: The Revival of the Religious Sciences.* The main work of Ghazālī and one of the most important and comprehensive books in the history of Islam. It is still, nine centuries later, in print in every single Muslim country in the world. It is in four volumes, the first containing the Islamic creed, the nature of knowledge, and a detailed description of the forms and secrets of each act of worship. The second is concerned with transactions, whether on the personal, social, commercial, or political level. The last two volumes are about virtues and ridding oneself of unwanted attributes, both of which endeavours are necessary for any traveller on the Sufi path. The third volume deals with 'Ruinous Things,' such as greed, avarice, ostentation, and pride, and the fourth with 'Saving Things' such as hope, fear, sincerity, fortitude, etc. The book is so detailed and thorough that it may, in the opinion of many Sufi shaykhs, be used as a guide on the path in the absence of a guiding shaykh.

37 *Khilāfa*: Vice-Regency, the status of one who, having achieved utter extinction in the Real, becomes the perfect instrument for His government of creation. Used in the context of the material world it designates the succession to the rulership of the Muslim nation following the death of the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, starting with the four 'Rightly Guided Successors' or Caliphs (*Khulafā'*): Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, and 'Alī

38 Hesitation in this context, as well as other anthropomorphic expressions such as 'anger', 'laughter', and so on, when used in relation to the Absolute are evidently in need of interpretation. *Imām* Muḥammad al-Bāqir, may God be pleased with him, was once questioned about the meaning of anger in the Qur'ānic verse: *Those upon whom My anger falls will plummet.* [XX:81] He replied that it meant 'expulsion and punishment' and added that whoever thought that God was subject to change was an infidel. Similarly, hesitation in this *ḥadīth* was said by Shāh Waliyullāh of Delhi to mean that God's solicitude for His servants takes different forms and directions which are sometimes apparently in opposition. God's concern for the servant's wellbeing implies that He wishes to protect him from all kinds of evil and bestow all kinds of pleasures on him, and His concern for the servant's spiritual ascent implies that illnesses and other constraints are necessary to purify him and bring forgiveness, and that he proceeds from one dimension to the next which means death to the state he is currently in and birth in another.

39 A 'Man' in Sufi terminology is one who has realized the virtues and become firmly established in sainthood and gnosis.

40 *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīa*: *The Meccan Openings*. The magnum opus of shaykh Muḥyiddīn ibn 'Arabī, may God be pleased with him.

41 In Islamic Law things are classified as permitted (*ḥalāl*) or prohibited (*ḥarām*). The permitted can be further subdivided into obligatory (*farḍ*), recommended (*mandūb*), just licit (*mubāḥ*), or distasteful or discouraged (*makrūh*).

42 People seem to have been lengthening their sleeves and upturning them as a sign of affluence.

43 *Those believe in Our signs who, when they are reminded of them, fall into prostration and hymn the praises of their Lord, and are not arrogant. Their sides shun their resting-places, they pray to their Lord in fear and hope, and of what We have provided them freely spend.* [XXXI:15, 16]

44 i.e. eat dry food at times and do not get used to luxury.

45 i.e. malevolent jinn who are likely to be present in the bathroom and other dirty places.

46 The book was written in days when people had neither running water nor sewage systems in their houses.

47 XXXII and LXXVI.

48 CIX, CXII, CXIII, CXIV.

49 The Most High [LXXXVII], The Sun [XCI], The Night [XCII].

50 A heart becomes 'sealed' when it is impervious to the penetration of spiritual light.

51 *Niṣāb*: the minimum amount for *zakāt* to become due.

52 i.e. in order to consume of the produce of certain specific trees, one should calculate the amount of *zakāt* to be paid for those in isolation from the rest of the trees.

53 i.e. so that what they possess falls below the minimum level at which *zakāt* becomes due.

54 *Suḥūr*: the pre-dawn meal.

55 *'Āshūrā'*: the day commemorating the flight of Moses, upon whom be peace, and his people from Pharaoh and his army. When the Prophet, may blessings and peace be upon him, on arrival at Madina, found the Jews fasting that day, he said that he and his followers were closer to Moses than the Madina Jews and had therefore more justification to fast that day.

56 The reward for a good deed is ten times its value; therefore a three days fast will bring a reward equal to thirty days, which is equivalent to fasting every single day of the month.

57 The 13th, 14th, and 15th of each lunar month.

58 Dhu'l-Qa'da, Dhu'l-Ḥijja and Muḥarram: the three months of the *Ḥajj* season. The fourth is Rajab.

59 Mondays and Thursdays are the days when people's deeds are reported to God, the doors of Heaven are opened, and forgiveness is swift. The Prophet was born on a Monday, he received the first Qur'ānic revelations on a Monday, and died in Madina on a Monday.

60 'O God! I ask You to choose for me with Your knowledge, act for me with Your power, and I ask You of Your immense grace. You can act and I cannot; You know and I know not; You are the Knower of the hidden things. O God! If this matter is good for my religion, my life in this world and the hereafter, then decide it for me, make it easy, and make it blessed for me. And if this matter is evil for my religion, my life and my hereafter, then turn me from it and turn it from me, and grant me goodness wherever it is and make me content with it.'

61 'Abd-Allāh, son of the second Caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, one of the most knowledgeable Companions.

62 Demons can be men or jinn, the term being used to designate a particularly evil kind of behaviour rather than any particular kind of creature.

63 i.e. when there will be no possibility of either hiding or denying the evil one is charged with committing.

64 A 'whole heart' is one which is pure of evil thoughts, feelings, and images; and in the context of Prophets and saints, one which is unblemished by the least regard for anything other than God.

65 Allowing the neighbour a share in inheriting would imply an extremely close relationship, equal to that between kinsmen.

66 To lower one's wing is to be gentle, compassionate, and responsive.

67 'I am by You!' means: You gave me such an honourable position in the proximity of Your Throne, therefore let me not be misused, for, close to You as I am, the consequence must be terrible.

68 Dhu'n-Nūn is a name of the Prophet Jonah (Yūnus).

69 *Ṣabr* may mean fortitude, patience, equanimity, or patient endurance, according to the context.

70 Sc., 'My desire is that I should not desire anything of the world, so that I may be given to detach myself from it and thus become worthy of that nearness to God which is my most profound desire.'

71 *The life of this world is but comfort of illusion.* [III:185] *The comfort of this world is scant; the hereafter is better for those who are Godfearing.* [IV:77] *Know that the life of the world is only play, distraction, ornaments, and boasting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children, . . . the life of this world is but comfort of illusion.* [LVII:20]

72 Green vegetation looks beautiful but easily turns into dry straw. As for girls' dolls they are treated as if alive when they are really a deceitful appearance of life devoid of any reality.

73 *Tawakkul* is total reliance and dependence on God, and to trustfully commit oneself to Him.

74 i.e. whether they are ritually clean or impure.

75 i.e. were it not for the veiling lights of Beauty things would look blemished and sinister, and there would be nothing good in them at all.

76 At the Supreme Assembly (*al-mala' al-a'lā*).

77 The Jabrīya were fatalists who held that man has no free will.

78 When Abraham, upon whom be peace, was cast into the fire for having destroyed the idols in the temple, and Gabriel came to him to ask him what request was he to convey to God on his behalf, he replied: 'His knowledge of my condition renders my prayer superfluous.'

79 Such light can only be perceived by the inner eye, the Eye of the Heart, in the unseen worlds.

80 Aloe: a plant the juice of which is extremely bitter.

81 The guardian angels who record his deeds.

GLOSSARY

Ash'arīs. Followers of the principal school of orthodox Muslim theology founded by Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (AD 873–935).

Baraka. Blessing; spiritual influence.

Ḥadīth Qudsī. A saying of God Himself reported by the Blessed Prophet, although not forming part of the Qur'ān.

Māturīdīs. Followers of the orthodox Muslim theological position of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. AD 944), today confined largely to Turkey and the Indian subcontinent.

Qibla. The direction of the Ka'ba in Mecca.

Rak'a. One unit of the regular Muslim prayer; a cycle of standing, bowing, standing again and prostrating twice.

Sādāt. Descendants of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace.

Sayyid. Singular of *Sādāt.*

Siwāk. A toothbrush made from the wood of a shrub which has known antibacterial properties.

Taḥmīd. To say, 'Praise belongs to God.'

Takbīr. To say, 'God is Most Great.'

Taqwā. Awareness of God, and hence careful obedience to Him.

Tasbīḥ. To say, 'Transcendant is God!'.

Wird. Any regularly repeated devotional act.

Witr. The optional prayer of an odd number of *rak'as* to be said before going to sleep at night.

Zakāt. The obligatory annual tax on wealth required by the Qur'ān.